ACTION COMICS PIZAZZ

銀と金

福本伸行 4

人間はどう演技しようといつか心は読まれてしまう!!

ACTION COMICS PIZAZZ

銀と金

ハイリスク・ハイリターン人生!!

4

福本伸行

双葉社

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カードの手の内は二の次!!
駆け引きが勝負のポーカーゲーム!!イカサマと金のカで相手を絞め上げる戦慄の欲望戦争!!

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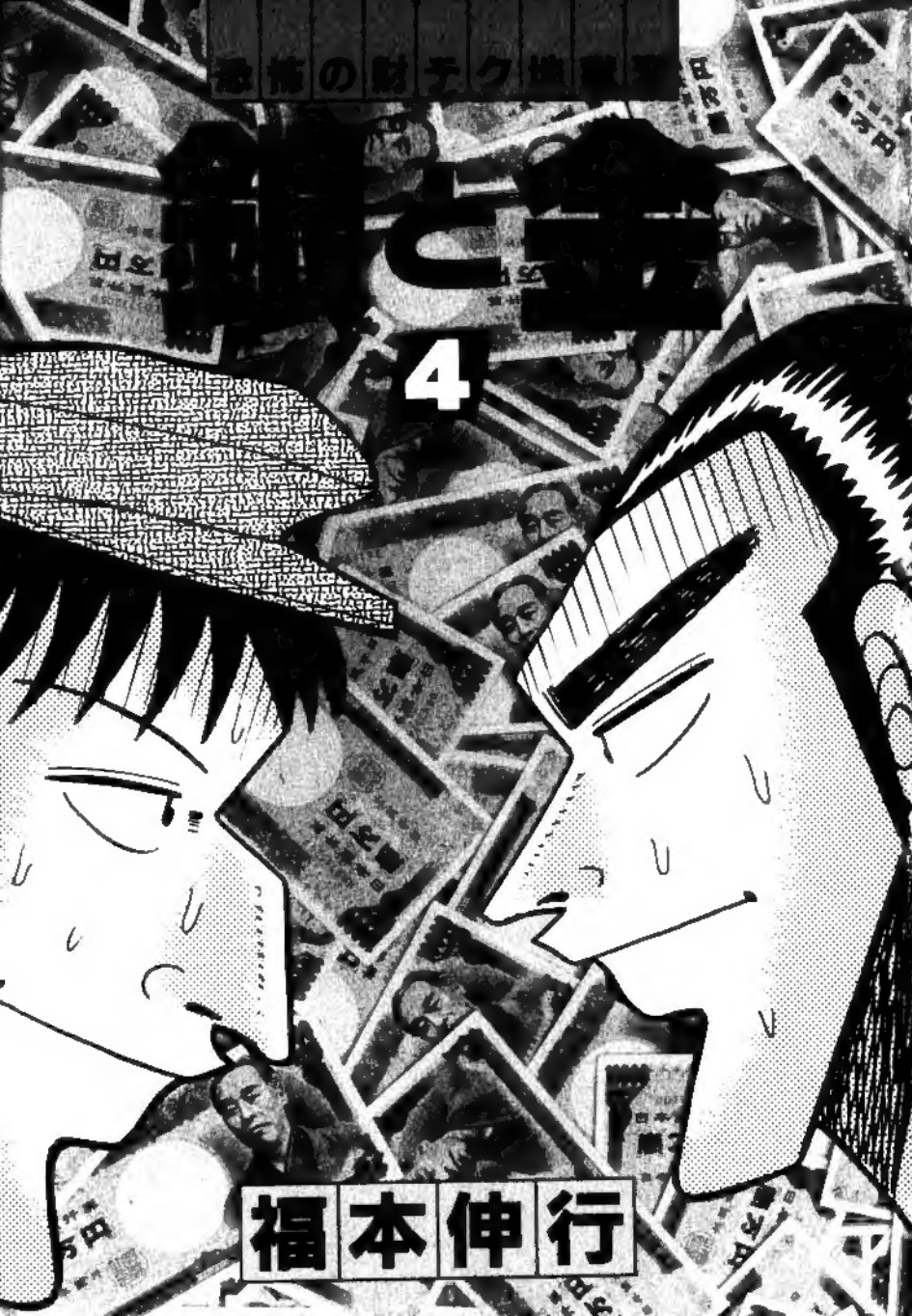
恐怖の財テク地雷原
紙と金
4
福本伸行

銀と金 4

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50 MILLIONS
....

YOU COULD LOSE EVERYTHING BECAUSE OF 50 MILLIONS...
SHUT UP!

YOU SEEM QUITE CONFIDENT OF YOUR SKILLS. I WOULD RECONSIDER THE AMOUNT WE'RE PUTTING IN LINE HERE.

.....
SO CUT THE CRAP AND LET'S FINISH THIS NONSENSE ONCE AND FOR ALL!
YOUR FOOL PLAY IS ONLY THAT, FOOL PLAY! IF THERE WAS A RISK FACTOR, I WOULD CLEARLY KNOW!

I DON'T NEED TO LOOK AT THE PAINTINGS FROM AFAR. A FAKE IS A FAKE EVEN IF YOU TURN ALL THE LIGHTS OUT.

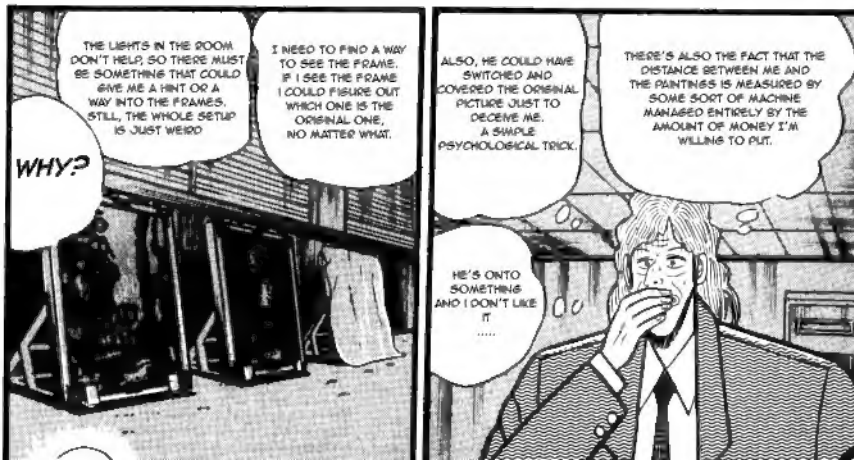
第23話
リスクに賭けろ!!
THE SHADOW GAME

.....
YET YOU STILL HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF THE OTHER FACTORS, THE ONES THAT COULD ACTUALLY RUIN YOUR CHANCES, NO MATTER HOW BIG THEY ARE.
YOUR CHANCES ARE SMALL, BUT NOT NULL.
POSSIBILITIES ARE THAT LIGHTING AND THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND THE PAINTINGS CONFUSE YOU, GIVING YOU A FALSE LOOK INTO THE PAINTINGS. THAT'S ONE ASPECT TO CONSIDER IN SUCH A TRICKY GAMBLE.
HEHE...
YOU ARE LACKING OF THAT "GUT FEELING" THAT KEEPS A GAMBLER GOING. THE THRILL THAT HELPS YOU COMING UP ANY OBSTACLE, THAT TELLS YOU EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR ENEMY. YOU ARE NOT CONSIDERING ME AS A FOE, WHICH IT MIGHT BE A MISTAKE.
IN THE END, YOU TRUST TOO MUCH IN YOUR TALENT AND YOUR STUDIES, BUT NOT IN YOUR INSTINCT.
BECAUSE I NEVER TRUSTED YOU. I NEVER TOOK THIS FOR GRANTED AND I NEVER MISTOOK YOUR ABILITIES AND TALENT. THAT'S WHY TODAY ONLY ONE OF US HAS A CERTAIN VICTORY. AND THIS VICTORY HAS BEEN DECIDED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.
I WOULDN'T BE WHERE I AM IF I WASN'T READY TO WIN. I AM FAR MORE CONFIDENT ON MY SKILLS THAN YOU ARE ON YOURS.
YOU'RE TAKING ME LIGHTLY.
I AM NOT THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE SHIVERING IN FEAR.
YOU'LL SEE, WE CAN'T LET YOU BUY FEETS OR METERS WITHOUT BEING CERTAIN, SO I PREPARED A WAY TO BE FAIR, TO GIVE YOU THE AMOUNT OF METERS YOUR MONEY IS WORTH.
WHICH MEASURING METHOD?
MEASURING .... METHOD ?
AND THAT WITHOUT TAKING CONSIDERATION INTO THE SPECIAL MEASURING METHOD I PREPARED FOR THE OCASSION.

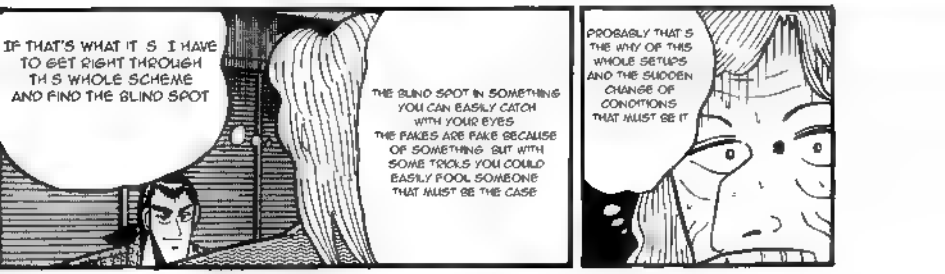
NOT QUITE ....
NOT SOMETHING I SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT. WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, THE AMOUNT OF MONEY I'M PUTTING IS ENOUGH TO GET ME CLOSE TO THE PAINTINGS.
WELL, BIG DEAL. IT'S JUST A CONVERSION TABLE OR SOMETHING.
AND THAT IS SOMETHING THAT COULD CAUSE QUITE A FUSS. SO I JUST GOT THIS "THINGY". TO HELP ME WITH THE DISTANCE... AND THIS "THINGY" HAS QUITE A PECULIARITY.
BY DOING THAT, NO MATTER HOW, ONE OF US WOULD BE IN CLEAR DISADVANTAGE.
WE ARE GOING TO TAKE MONEY OUT OF THOSE BAGS. 50 MILLIONS TO BE EXACT.
THAT'S WHY THIS MACHINE'S SO SPECIAL.
TO GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE: YOU ARE NOW BETTING 50 MILLIONS. THOSE 50 MILLIONS WON'T BUY YOU METERS BY THEMSELVES. THE MACHINE WILL COUNT THEM.
WHETHER YOU GUESS IT RIGHT OR NOT IS ENTIRELY UP TO YOU. YOU ARE THE CEZANNE'S EXPERT AFTER ALL.
AND YOU MAY ONLY MOVE ABOVE THE LINE MADE BY THE 50 MILLIONS. WHAT'S GOOD IS THAT THE MONEY YOU PUT IN LINE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COVER APPROXIMATELY THE 70% OF THE DISTANCE.
YOU SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THIS IS NOT THE ONLY FACTOR THAT COULD MAKE YOU LOSE, BUT YOU STILL ARE IN QUITE A GOOD POSITION.
IT SHOULD BE AROUND TWICE THE LENGTH YOU WERE EXPECTING...
THE MACHINE WILL PILE THIS MONEY AND IT WILL LET YOU MOVE BASED ONLY ON THE DISTANCE CREATED BY THE AMOUNT OF MONEY YOU PUT ON THE LINE FIRST.

SO MAKE SURE THAT WHAT YOU'RE CHOOSING IS THE RIGHT CHOICE, BECAUSE I WON'T GO BACK ON YOU ONCE THE CHOICE THIS IS OVER.
THIS ISN'T A NORMAL GAMBLE AND I AM NOT A COMMON PUNK.
WHILE YOU MAY THINK THIS IS EASY, AND THAT IT WON'T TAKE YOU MORE THAN A SECOND, I WARN YOU.
AFTER ALL, THIS IS A GAMBLE WITH HIGH STAKES. WE CAN'T JUST TRUST EACH OTHER WITH RANDOM MEASUREMENTS OR BULLSHIT LIKE THAT.
LET THE GAMBLE BEGIN!
SO BE GET READY AND LET'S GET THIS STARTED FOR ONCE
AND I SHALL CRUSH YOU!
YOU'RE A COCKY KID ....
.....

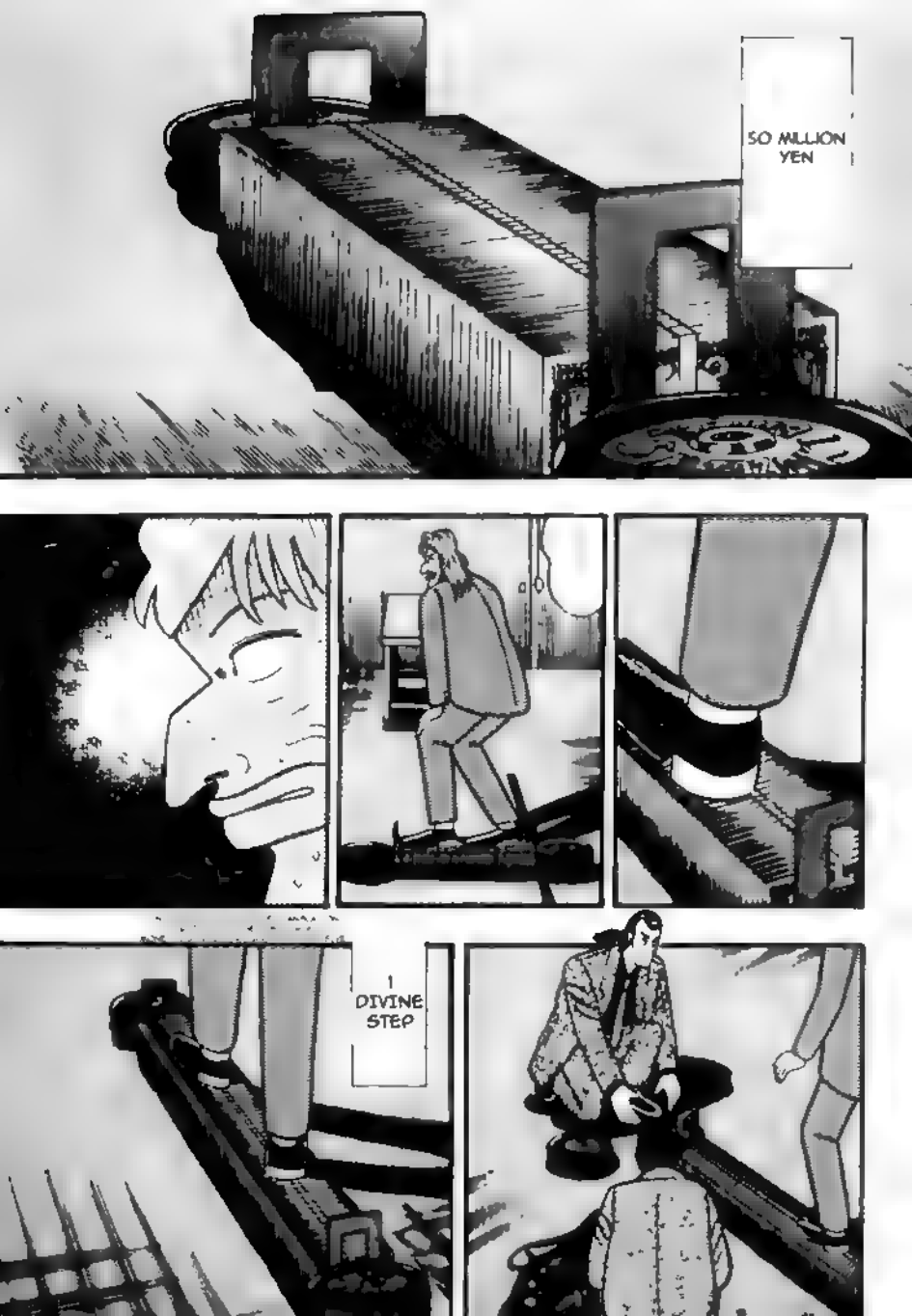
ぼ お ～～～
*SFX: BAO~ (DOUBT)
I STILL DON'T KNOW THE MEANING BEHIND THE COVERED PAINTING. IT COULD BE A TRAP, OR A DECOY TO CATCH MY ATTENTION.
WHY WOULD HE COVER ONE OF THE PAINTINGS IN SUCH A DARK ROOM?
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG ABOUT THIS. SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T FIT AT ALL.

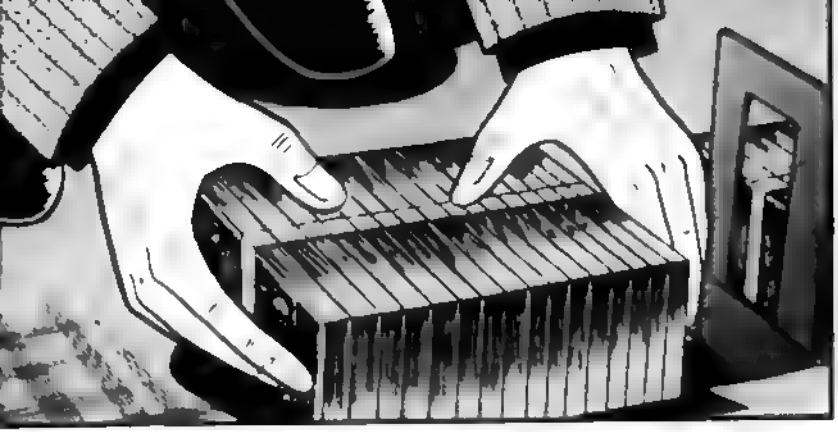

THE LIGHTS IN THE ROOM DON'T HELP, SO THERE MUST BE SOMETHING THAT COULD GIVE ME A HINT OR A WAY INTO THE FRAMES. STILL, THE WHOLE SETUP IS JUST WEIRD
I NEED TO FIND A WAY TO SEE THE FRAME. IF I SEE THE FRAME I COULD FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE IS THE ORIGINAL ONE, NO MATTER WHAT.
WHY?
ALSO, HE COULD HAVE SWITCHED AND COVERED THE ORIGINAL PICTURE JUST TO DECEIVE ME. A SIMPLE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRICK.
THERE'S ALSO THE FACT THAT THE DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND THE PAINTINGS IS MEASURED BY SOME SORT OF MACHINE MANAGED ENTIRELY BY THE AMOUNT OF MONEY I'M WILLING TO PUT.
HE'S ONTO SOMETHING AND I DON'T LIKE IT
.....

BUT WHY S HE TAKING SO MANY PRECAUTIONS IF HE KNOWS WHO'S GOING WIN?
THERE S A CHANCE OF ALL THIS TO BE A BLUFF MAYBE HE KNOWS I WILL GUESS NOW AND HE JUST WANTS ME TO GIVE UP AND TURN THE MONEY
THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING HE S NOT CERTAIN OF SOMETHING HE CAN T JUST SAY FOR CERTAIN A BLIND SPOT IN HIS AROUND HIS PLAN THAT COULD MAKE ME WIN
MAYBE


IF THAT'S WHAT IT S I HAVE TO GET RIGHT THROUGH TH S WHOLE SCHEME AND FIND THE BLIND SPOT
THE BLIND SPOT IN SOMETHING YOU CAN EASILY CATCH WITH YOUR EYES THE FAKES ARE FAKE BECAUSE OF SOMETHING BUT WITH SOME TRICKS YOU COULD EASILY FOOL SOMBONE THAT MUST BE THE CASE
PROBABLY THAT S THE WHY OF THIS WHOLE SETUPS AND THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF CONDITIONS THAT MUST BE IT

THAT HE DIDN'T CHANGE THE STATE OF THE PAINTINGS IT HAS TO BE SOMETHING EASY TO NOTICE AT FIRST SIGHT
A S S U M N G

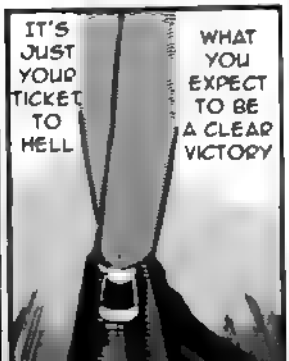

50 MILLION YEN
1 DIVINE STEP

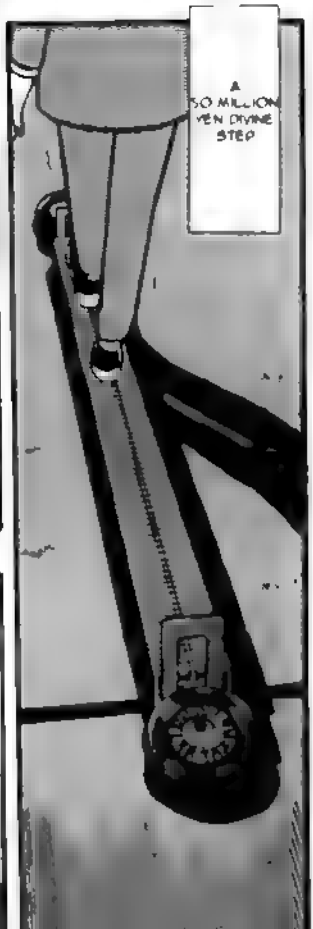


HEHE

BUT I'M 2 STEPS AHEAD OF YOU MY FRIEND

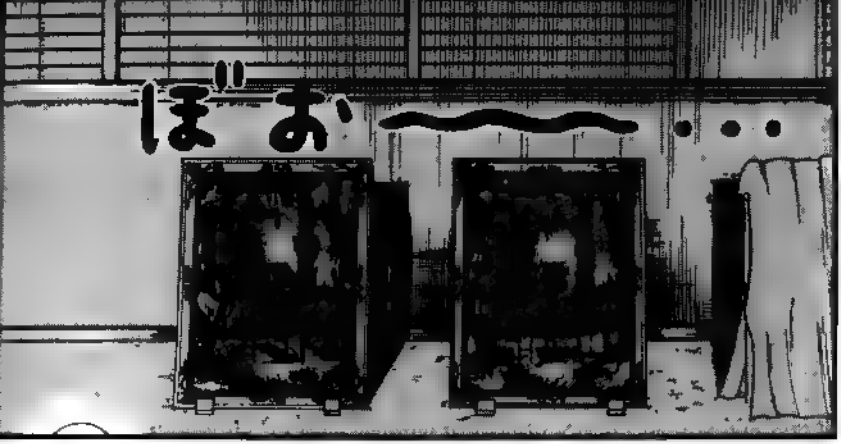
I HAVE EVERY-THING COVERED


IT'S JUST YOUR TICKET TO HELL
WHAT YOU EXPECT TO BE A CLEAR VICTORY


A 50 MILLION YEN DIVINE STEP

EH...?
YOU CAN RELAX NOW
ポニ...
EVERYTHING S GOING ACCORDING TO THE PLAN SO DON'T WORRY FOR NOW
I GOT THIS COVERED
HEHE...
BESIDES WE CAN'T REALLY TRUST THAT TH S GUY DOESN'T HAVE ANY TRICKS UP H S SLEEVE
YOU CAN'T JUST TELL ME THAT, WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OPERATION AND WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT
THE PAINTINGS WILL DECIDE THE REAL OUTCOME OF THIS GAMBLE.
HE'S CORNERED IN THIS SETUP AND HIS OPTIONS ARE RUNNING LOW. SO EVERYTHING SHOULD GO EXACTLY AS WE WANT TO IT S NOT MEANT FOR US TO DO ANYTHING ELSE AT LEAST NOT FOR NOW
UNFORTUNATELY THIS WON'T END HERE AT LEAST NOT NOW THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF TO MAKE THE PLAN WORK PROPERLY
I KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT AND I TRUST THAT THE OUTCOME OF THIS GAMBLE IS GOING IN OUR WAY
SO WE BETTER LET THIS BE FOR NOW. THE OUTCOME OF THIS OPERATION DEPENDS ON WHETHER THE SETUP WORKED ON HIM OR NOT

IT'S L KE PLAYING A GOLF MATCH
THE DISTANCE HE TOOK HAS ALREADY GIVEN HIM A HUGE HANDICAP THE MOMENT HE STARTS WALKING THROUGH HIS OWN PILE OF MONEY TOLD HIM SO
HE'S BEING RATIONAL AND CAUTIOUS WITHOUT TAKING CARE OF HIS OWN MISTAKES
THIS GUY IS CORNERED IN HIS OWN PARANOIA AND MIND-TRICKERY
HIS SENSES ARE BETRAYING HIM AND FEAR IS RUNNING THROUGH HIS BLOOD. THERE'S NO WAY NEITHER OF US COULD AFFORD TO LOSE THIS
THE ODDS OF A BIZARRE GAMBLE WITH AN UNCERTAIN WINNER
AND SEEING NAKAJO AS THE KIND OF MAN HE IS HE'S MOST LIKELY SHIVERING IN FEAR OF THE UNCERTAIN AND THE ODDS
AND THAT HAUNTS THE PLAYER NO MATTER HOW PROFESSIONAL OR HOW MUCH TALENT THEY HAVE THEY STILL ARE AGAINST THE ODDS
EVEN IF YOU'RE 70% SURE YOUR NEXT SHOT IS IN BECAUSE OF HOW CLOSE YOU'RE TO THE HOLE YOU STILL HAVE A CHANCE OF LOSING
WILL HIS OWN TRICK GO AGAINST HIM?
HEHE...
AFTER ALL THIS ISN'T A CHEAP EVERYDAY GAMBLE THERE'S A LOT OF MONEY AND A VALUABLE PIECE OF ART ON THE TABLE NO ONE CAN AFFORD TO LOSE THIS KIND OF GAMBLE
THE CHALLENGE IS NOT ABOUT HIS TALENT IS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT HE CAN HANDLE THE PRESSURE OF THE ODDS AND THE THING HE PUT ON THE LINE.
SO HE MUST BE CERTAIN ABOUT HIS OWN CHOICES OR AWAIT FOR THE WORST OF THINGS TO HAPPEN


ぼぉ〜〜〜・・・

THE LIGHTS ARE SO DIM I CAN'T REALLY SEE THE COLOURS OR THE DETAILS IN THE PAINTING
FROM HERE THEY ALL LOOK THE SAME IN PRETTY MUCH EVERY ASPECT
COULD IT BE

THE PAINTING
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD SEE THE VARIATIONS OF EACH PAINTING FROM THIS FAR

I STILL CAN'T SEE THEM CLEARLY
NO WAY ....

REMOVED ....

BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T ALTER
BUT...
REMOVED ..

WAIT A MINUTE ....
THAT HE PLANNED THIS FROM THE BEGINNING?
HOW DID HE FIGURE I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO PASS THIS

2
DIVINE
STEP
I JUST NEED TO SEE IT
IF THE MARK IS STILL THERE I COULD WIN THIS
THE MARK
DON'T ERASE IT
THE MARK
DON'T ERASE IT
SHIT ...
.....
THEY PROBABLY DID NOT NOTICE THE MARK IN THE PAINTING SO I COULD JUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION IN HAND
AND USE THE LIGHT IN THE ROOM TO SHOW ME THE MARK OF THE ORIGINAL PAINTING
NO SIGN
THERE'S
DON'T ERASE IT

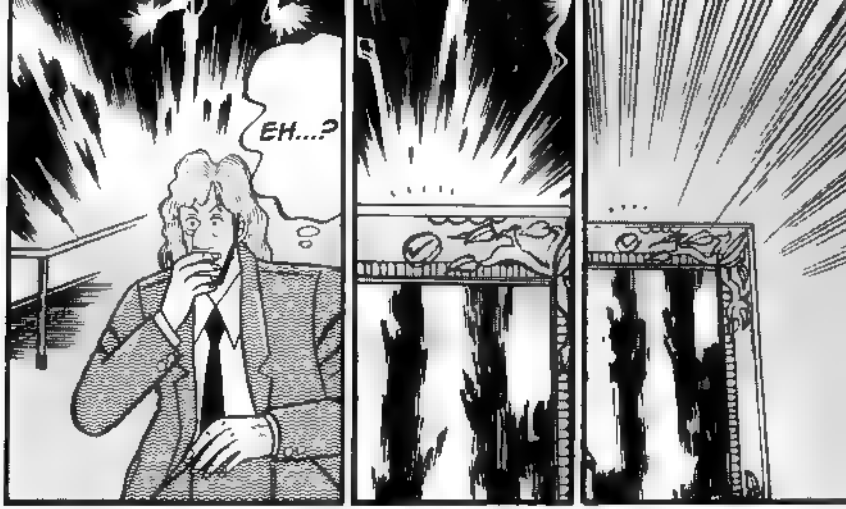
IT'S THAT I'M PUTTING MY NAME MY OWN PERSONA ON THE LINE
IN A GAME WITH AN OBSCURE INTENTION AND A TERRIBLE HANDICAP AGAINST THE ONE THAT'S BETTING THE MOST
WHAT'S WORSE
PUTTING MY SAVINGS ON THE LINE IN THIS STATE IS TERRIFYING
?
I'M QUITE TERRIFIED BY TH S
HA...?
BUT IN THIS STATE I'LL MOST LIKELY SUCCUMB TO FEAR AND FALL INTO THE DARKNESS OF THIS ROOM
SO BEFORE THAT HAPPENS I WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST YOU SOMETHING MORITA
IT'S NOT SIMPLE AFTER ALL, I'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR YEARS AND I HAVE NEVER ENCOUNTER SUCH AN OUTRAGEOUS AND UNFAIR DISADVANTAGE IT HURTS HAVING TO BE IN THIS STATE
.....
JUST FOR A SECOND ....
PLEASE, PLEASE ....
I WANT TO LOOK AT THE PAINTINGS FROM ANOTHER ANGLE YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO PUT THEM AN INCH CLOSER
I JUST WANT YOU TO LIFT THE LAMP OVER THERE A LITTLE BIT

JUST FOR A SECOND...
PLEASE ...
YOU COULD BE CHEATING
UNDER ABSOLUTELY NO CIRCUMSTANCE I WOULD CHEAT WHEN MY HONOR IS ON THE LINE!
IT IS LIKELY ....
BUT NOT SOMETHING WOULD DO!
I JUST NEED TO SEE THE PAINTINGS WITH A DIFFERENT ANGLE
I WON'T TRY TO DO ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THE PAINTINGS!
.....
CHI....
JUST DO AS HE SAYS AND LIFT THE LAMP
CACHING!

IT NEEDS TO BE A BIT HIGHER
SO...
MAYBE BY STANDING UP
HE HE HE! NOW THE VICTORY IS MINE!
IDIOT!

ほ"わ・・・
THE MARK
THERE IT IS!
THEY DIDN'T NOTICE IT.
THE MARK ....

HEHE
IT'S A MIRACLE
HEHE
A MIRACLE


EH...?

I'M EXTREMELY SURE I DID THE MARK IN THE ORIGINAL PAINTING AND THAT ONE ONLY!
THE MARK I MADE IN THE ORIGINAL PAINT IS ALSO ON THE FAKE PAINTING..?

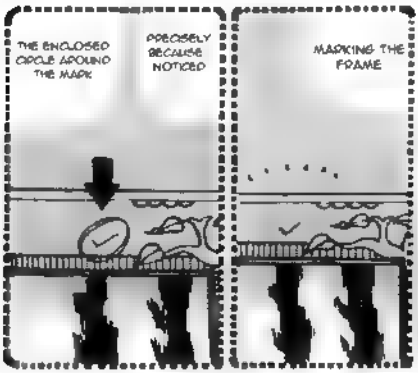
I HAVE NO MORE CLUES ON WHICH ONE IS THE ORIGINAL!
BUT IF THERE ARE TWO MARKS IT MEANS A SECOND MARK WAS MADE IN ONE OF THE FAKE PAINTINGS
AND THAT MEANS THERE'S A CHANCE THAT ALL THE PAINTINGS IN THE ROOM HAVE THE SAME MARK MEANING THAT

THAT MEANS THIS GUY DID MARK THE FAKE PAINTINGS!
THAT'S QUITE A NICE TRICK YOU GOT THERE
I WASN'T EXPECTING IT
IT SEEMS THAT THE RAIN RUINED YOUR PARADE
HEHE...
THE OTHER TWO PAINTINGS ...?
SO WHEN I NOTICED IT I DECIDED TO MAKE THINGS INTERESTING
AND NOTHING COULD BE MORE INTERESTING THAN MARKING THE OTHER TWO PAINTINGS RIGHT?

第●話

金の橋を渡れ!!

CROSSING THE GOLDEN BRIDGE


THE ENCLOSED CIRCLE AROUND THE MARK
PRECISELY BECAUSE NOTICED
MARKING THE FRAME

HE KNEW ALL ALONG
....

OI! MY GOOD FRIEND
WHY WOULD MORITA MAKE TWO MARKS INSTEAD OF JUST ERASING IT?

IF HE SAW A MARK AROUND THE PAINTING
BUT WHY MAKING A CIRCLE AROUND IT?

OH...
WOULD YOU INSTEAD WANT ME TO ?
HOW MUCH LONGER ARE YOU GOING TO HAVE ME HERE DOING THIS
WAIT!
OK
ASK YOU TO
AH...
EH?
どわ。
YOU SHOULD SHUT THE HELL UP
AND DO NOT MOVE NOT EVEN FOR ONE SECOND
DO NOT MOVE

?
ざわ
ざわ ざわ

MY AIM WAS TO ACCUMULATE TRUST BETWEEN BOTH OF YOU SO I COULD CRUSH BOTH WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS YOU
WHAT YOU'VE BUILT SO FAR AND TH S GUY
NAKAJO WILL FALL IN A FEW MINUTES

HUH?
.....
BUTTONED UP IN THIS GAME!
GOOD ...
SUCH...!
DO THE SAME THING AS THE ONE

ざわ…

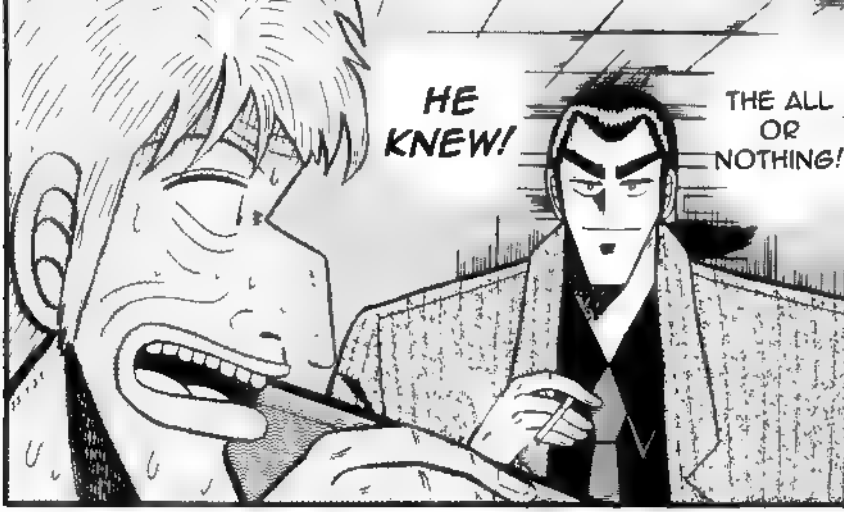
IN OTHER WORDS
HE WAS THE ONE PERSON THIS GUY WANTED ME TO TRUST

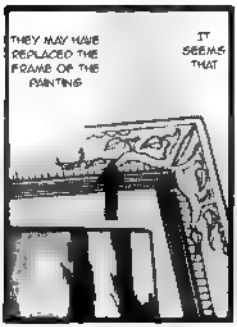
HE KNEW I WAS WITH THIS GUY

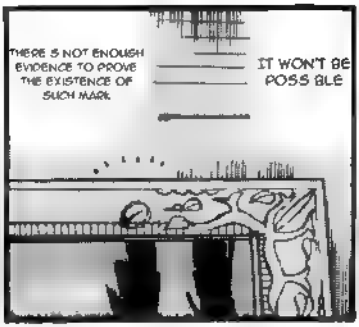
HE'S ALSO OBSESSED WITH THE

THEN I RUSHED TO THE COFFEE SHOP. MAYBE

I DID THE MARK TO THE FRAME OF THE PAINTING
AFTER THEY WENT OUT OF THE ROOM

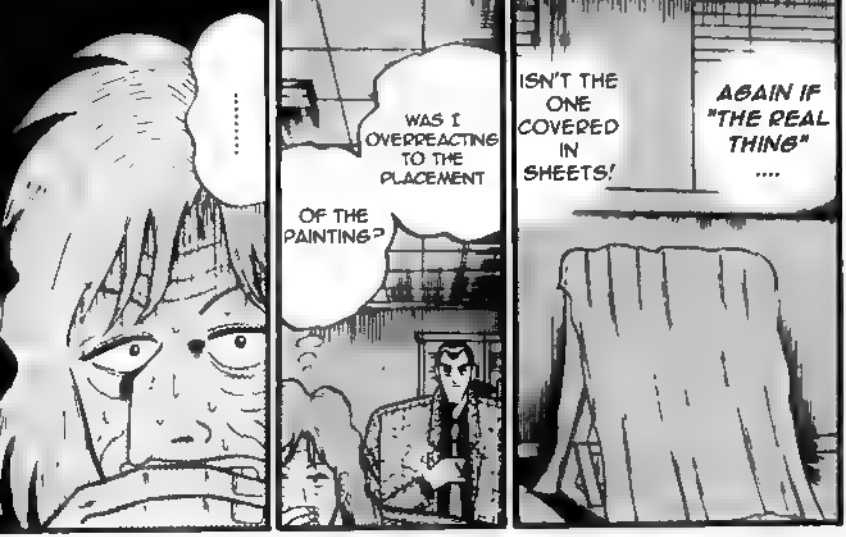

HE KNEW!
THE ALL OR NOTHING!


THEY MAY HAVE REPLACED THE FRAME OF THE PAINTING
IT SEEMS THAT


THERE S NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH MARK
IT WON'T BE POSS BLE

I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THE REAL PAINTING WOULD BE EXPOSED, AS IT IS CLEARLY MARKED
OR MAYBE I SHOULD RECON-SIDER!

THAT MUCH OF IT COULD HAS
AND THEN PUT THAT FRAME INTO ONE OF THE FAKE PAINTINGS TO MAKE ME BELIEVE IT WAS THAT ONE
IS SOMETHING ONE COULD NATURALLY THINK


.....
WAS I OVERREACTING TO THE PLACEMENT OF THE PAINTING?
ISN'T THE ONE COVERED IN SHEETS!
AGAIN IF "THE REAL THING"
....

I DECIDED TO BET A LOT OF MONEY
WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT
WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE PICTURE
BUT...

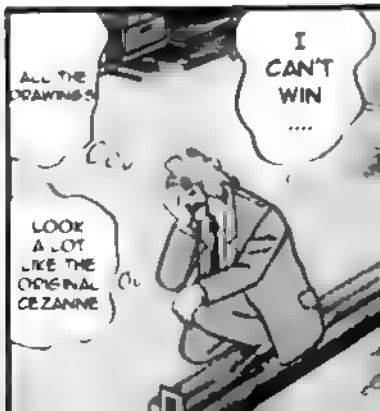
I LOOK
....
LOOK
....
WHAT I COULD BE LOOKING AT WITH THE MARK COULD OR NOT BE THE ORIGINAL
BESIDES

TO SEE THE PAINTING .....
THE VIEW I HAVE FROM THIS ANGLE A TOO BAD TO SPECULATE

I DON'T KNOW
USELESS ...

I HAVE TO MOVE
AND GET A CLOSER LOOK TO THE PAINTING

ホロ・・・

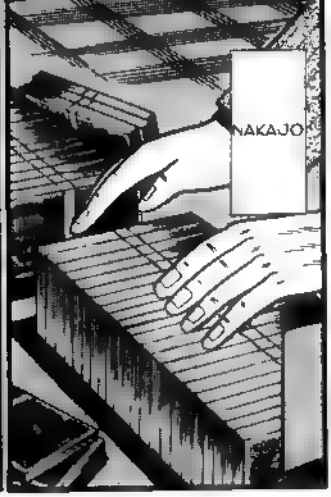

I CAN'T WIN ....
ALL THE DRAWINGS
LOOK A LOT LIKE THE ORIGINAL CEZANNE

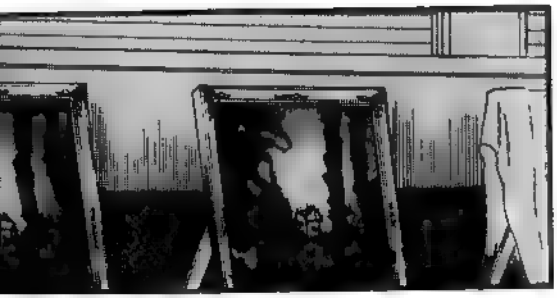
WITH AT LEAST 400 MILLION YEN!
DIVINE STEPS .....
I WOULD NEED TO DO MORE ...
I WAS AN IDIOT ON TAKING YOU SO LIGHTLY
I'LL BET WHATEVER AMOUNT OF MONEY I HAVE LEFT
NOW THAT ....
I DON'T KNOW ...
I DON'T KNOW WHICH ONE IS THE ORIGINAL
BASED ON THE POSITION AM RIGHT NOW
IT IS OUT OF QUESTION ....
NOW MORITA ....

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU ARE SUCH A PESSIMISTIC
I'LL DO AS YOU WISH, NAKAJO
PLEASE FORGIVE ME
HEHE...

YOU HAVE CULTIVATED YOUR KNOWLEDGE IN CEZANNE FOR 30 YEARS
THIS WAS JUST A MEASURE TAKEN ORIGINALLY TO COUNTER YOUR TRICKS, NAKAJO

IT IS DETER-MINED
IT IS DETER-MINED
IF YOU BELIEVE A GAMBLE LIKE THIS IS SOMETHING EASY
HEHE..
SUCH A THING .....





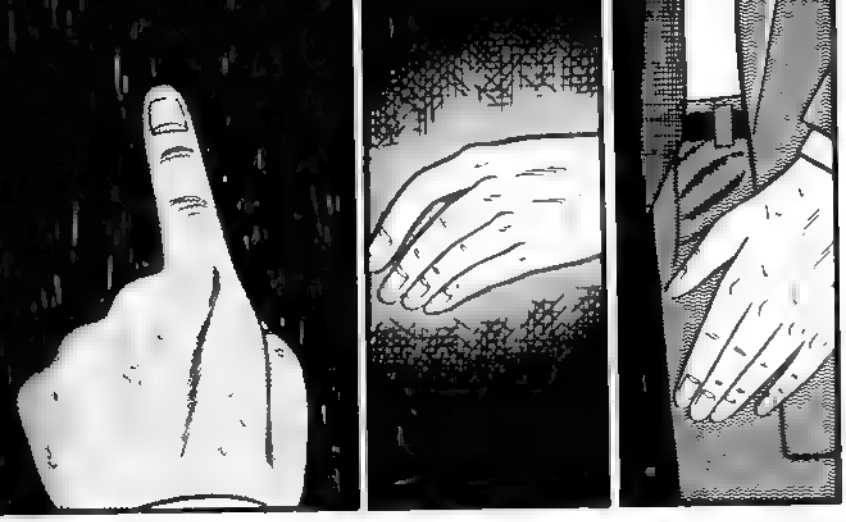
2 METERS CLOSER...!

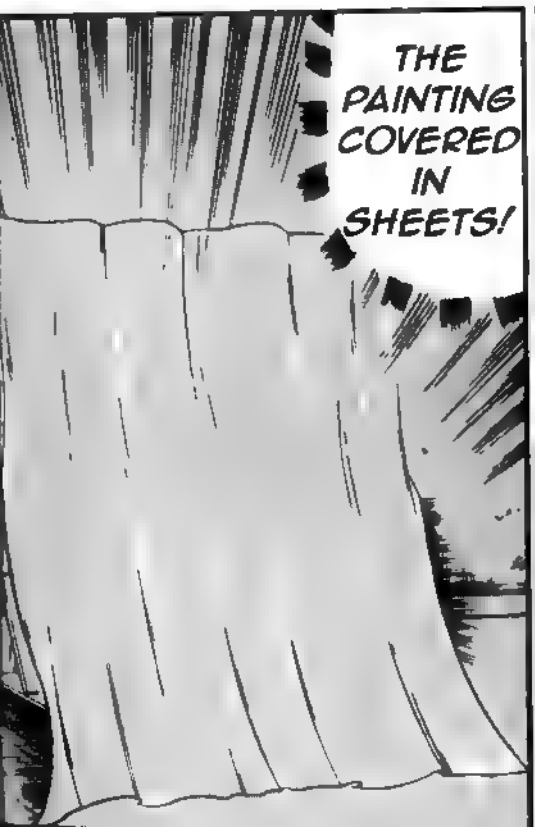
ALL THAT'S LEFT...!

IS FOR YOU TO DECIDE!

ざわ…ざわ
OR THE AMOUNT OF PAINTINGS YOU OWN
A WORLD OF DECEPTION AND VANITY RULED BY MONEY
OR MAYBE BOTH?
WHAT WE SEE IS THAT HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HE CHASES
THE PROBLEM IS WANTING TO SURVIVE 30 YEARS AS AN ART DEALER
30 YEARS OF THIS
ORIGINALLY THIS WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A GAMBLE
HEHE...
AND HAD
AT THAT TIME IF NAKAJO WAS IN THE PEACH GAMBLE
BUT..
THAT WAS WALKING IN THE CEZANNE PAVILION OF THE ART MUSEUM SUDDENLY STOPPED
IT WAS ABOUT A YOUNG ASPIRING ARTIST
AT THAT TIME IF NAKAJO SIMPLY

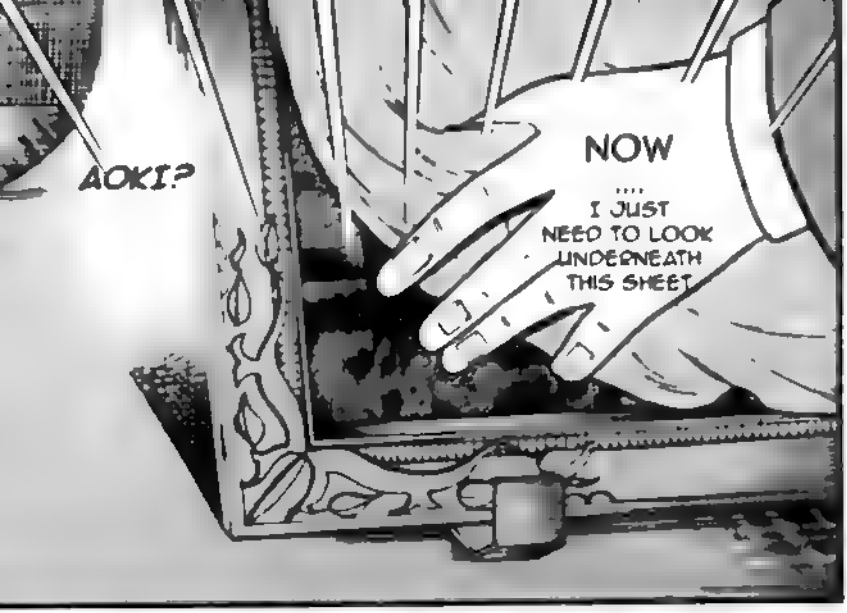
WILL BE PUT TO THE TEST IN THIS GAMBLE!
30 YEARS BEING A TOP-NOTCH ART DEALER
AND THIS IS THE MOMENT THAT DEFINES EVERYTHING!




THE PAINTING COVERED IN SHEETS!

NAKAJO IS POINTING

THIS IS THE MOST DECISIVE MOMENT FOR NAKAJO
.....
AT LONG LAST
AT LONG LAST IT ENDS
WHETHER THE PAINTING IS REAL
YES!
OR ONE OF THE FAKE PAINTINGS!
THIS IS THE REAL THING!
EH?
チラ


AOKI?
NOW
....
I JUST NEED TO LOOK UNDERNEATH THIS SHEET

ガタ
ガタ
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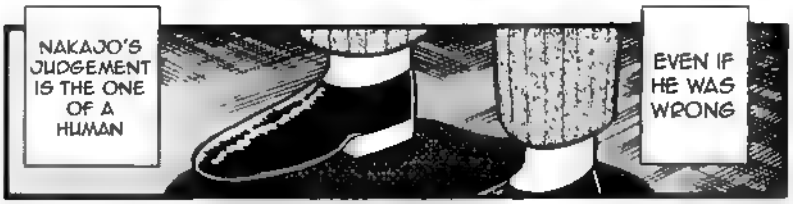
ス

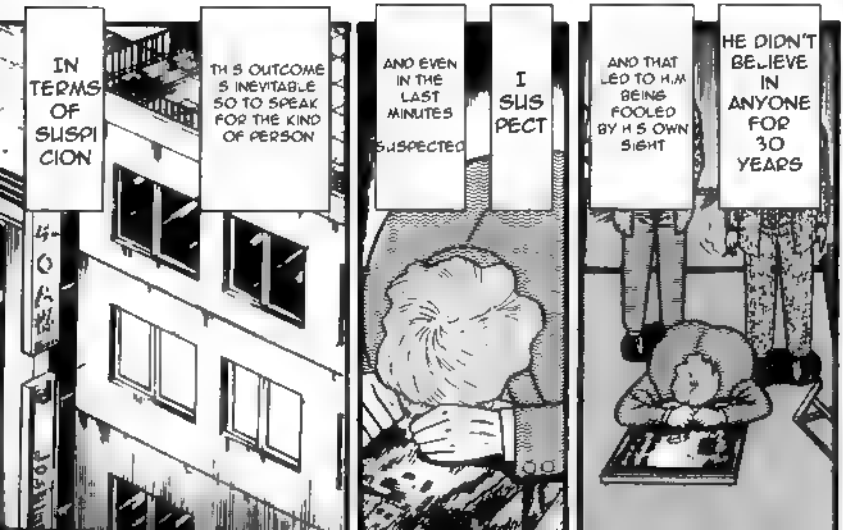
IT CAN'T BE... SUCH!

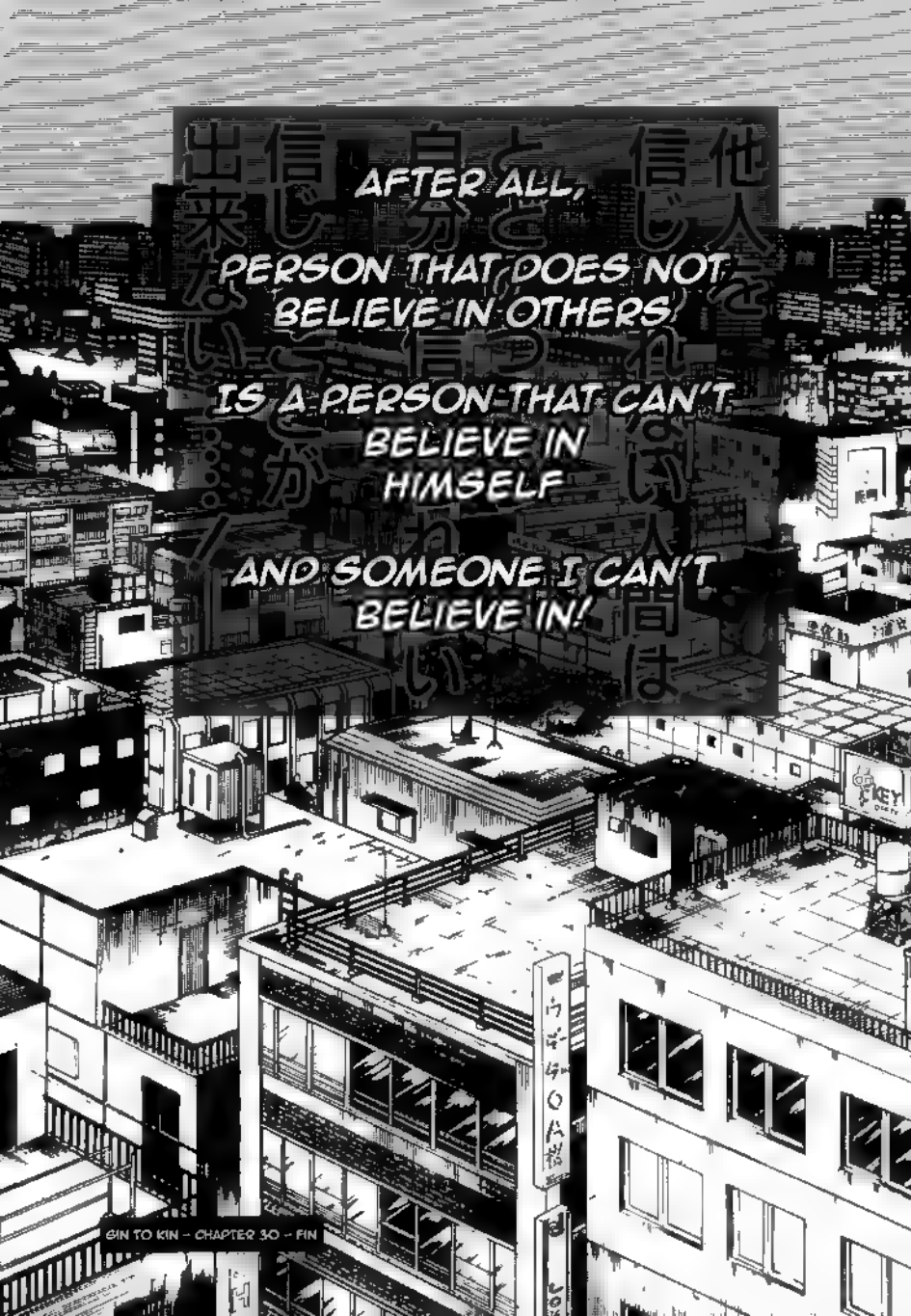
AOKI'S PAINTING!

ガヴ・ガヴ・

EH?
USUU~


NAKAJO'S JUDGEMENT IS THE ONE OF A HUMAN
EVEN IF HE WAS WRONG


IN TERMS OF SUSPI CION
TH S OUTCOME S INEVITABLE SO TO SPEAK FOR THE KIND OF PERSON
AND EVEN IN THE LAST MINUTES
SUSPECTED
I SUS PECT
AND THAT LED TO H M BEING FOOLED BY H S OWN SIGHT
HE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN ANYONE FOR 30 YEARS


他人を信じれない人間は
自分とを信じることが出来ないやつ…！
AFTER ALL,
PERSON THAT DOES NOT BELIEVE IN OTHERS
IS A PERSON THAT CAN'T BELIEVE IN HIMSELF
AND SOMEONE I CAN'T BELIEVE IN!
KEY
GIN TO KIN – CHAPTER 30 – FIN

第31話

人生の明暗

THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES OF LIFE

MORITA-KUN...
MORITA-KUN...

PLEASE, I BEG YOU...
MORITA-KUN...
PLEASE ...!

MORITA-KUN
M-
PLEASE...!
WAIT, CAN'T WE JUST TALK ABOUT THIS...?
LET'S GO
YEAH...
YEP...
GOT IT ALL PACKED UP, KAWATA...?
I KNOW!
WHY DON'T YOU HIRE ME, MORITA-KUN...?
FOR A 30%... NO, A 20% CUT OF THE PROFITS...
I COULD PROVIDE YOU WITH A STREAM OF WEALTHY COLLECTORS WHO'D JUST LOVE TO TRY THIS GAME
I WON'T BEG YOU TO GIVE MY MONEY BACK...
I'D NEVER DO SUCH A DISHONORABLE THING

KNOWING THAT I COULD CUT YOU DOWN JUST ONCE IS ENOUGH FOR ME
I'M SORRY, BUT I'M REALLY NOT INTERESTED
NO...!

HERE'S THE MONEY WE AGREED ON, AOKI-SAN...
1/10th...
...
...
FOR-GIVE ME...!
I KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON THE WHOLE TIME...
I'M SORRY...
...BUT I WAS COM-PLETELY BLINDED BY GREED

HE DOUBLE-CROSSED US...
HEY! MORITA! WHAT THE HECK DO YA THINK YER DOIN'?
OH, IT'S ALRIGHT
HUH...?

BUT...
IT'S ONLY CHUMP CHANGE...
DON'T GET YOURSELF WORKED UP ABOUT IT

GOOD-BYE

ICHI BANKAN

YOU LOOK A LITTLE PERPLEXED
HEH HEH...
WELL DUH!

ムス
...
...
...

WHA...?

I KNEW BEFOREHAND THAT HE'D BETRAY US...

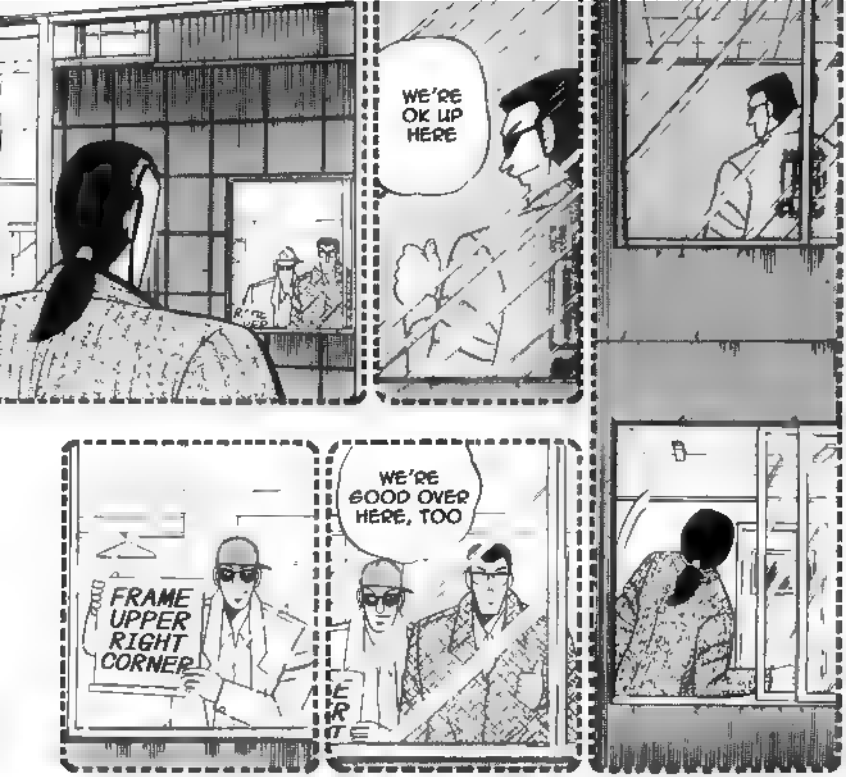
DAMN KID DOUBLE-CROSSED US... IF THINGS HADN'T GONE AS WELL AS THEY DID, THEN WE...
HEH HEH...

JUST LIKE I THOUGHT HE WOULD
AND SURE ENOUGH, HE HIGH-TAILED IT BACK TO NAKAJO
AND OFFERED HIM A MEASLY THREE MILLION FOR HIS PART IN THE SCAM
...I TOTALLY SLAMMED AOKI'S PAINTING ABILITY
IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT HE'D HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART
YES, AND THAT'S THE REASON WHY...
...YA KNEW?
HE WOULDN'T JOIN IN UNLESS HE WAS SURE THAT THE GAME COULD BE SET UP TO HIS ADVANTAGE
HE WAS QUITE CAUTIOUS
WAS GETTING NAKAJO TO COMMIT TO THE GAME ITSELF
THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THIS SCAM TO SET UP
THAT WAS THE HIGHEST HURDLE
AOKI WAS BAIT, SO TO SPEAK
BAIT TO REEL IN NAKAJO'S BIG FISH
HE WOULD NEED A LITTLE HELP FROM AOKI
IN ORDER FOR NAKAJO TO MAKE THIS DETER-MINATION
NAKAJO MUST HAVE JUMPED FOR SHEER JOY AFTER GETTING AOKI TO AGREE TO WORK FOR HIM AS A SPY

ALTHOUGH THE GAME WAS SET UP TO PUT THOSE DISCERNING EYES OF HIS AT A DISADVANTAGE
I WAS STILL TERRIFIED FOR THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES
WITH AOKI AS AN ALLY, NAKAJO JOINED THE GAME
ざわ…
…
…
…
IF HE WAS ABLE TO MAKE HIS DECISION WITH JUST ONE GOOD LOOK
I HAD A HUNCH HE'D GUESS CORRECTLY RIGHT OFF THE BAT
WHY'S THAT...?
HIS INTUITIVE-NESS WAS INTIM-IDATING
I WANTED TO IMPAIR HIS ABILITY TO MAKE THAT SNAP DECISION
SO, BEFORE HE WAS ALLOWED TO VIEW THE PAINTINGS, I ADDED A RATHER LENGTHY LIST OF REQUIREMENTS
…
…
IN MY ESTIMATION, IF HE LET GREED GET THE BETTER OF HIM, NAKAJO WOULD FAIL
I WAS RE-LIEVED
AFTER THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GOLDEN BRIDGE WAS UNDERWAY

THEN IT WAS PRETTY RISKY, HUH
HMM
I SEE...
IF NAKAJO HAD STAYED SHARP, HE COULDDA WON
SURE...
EVEN IF HE *HAD* PICKED THE CORRECT PAINTING, IT WOULDN'T HAVE MATTERED
HOW-EVER...
IN THE ROOM RIGHT ABOVE WHERE WE HELD TONIGHT'S EVENT
AND IN THE BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET
FROM THOSE TWO LOCATIONS, ALL ACTIVITY IN THE ROOM...
TO AVOID LOSING, I HAD SOME EXTRA SECURITY MEASURES PUT IN PLACE
WHA...?
I KNEW WHAT AOKI WAS UP TO!

WAS SECRETLY BEING FILMED...!
AND WHEN NAKAJO MARKED THE PAINTING
WHEN AOKI LET NAKAJO IN TO THE ROOM
...
...
さわ。。
I CHECKED TO SEE IF ANYTHING HAD BEEN TAMPERED WITH
WHEN I WAS ALONE IN THE ROOM
AND SO, BEFORE THE GAME HAD BEGUN
BOTH THOSE SCENES WERE CAUGHT ON TAPE


WE'RE OK UP HERE
WE'RE GOOD OVER HERE, TOO
FRAME UPPER RIGHT CORNER

IN THE END, HE WAS STRANGLED BY HIS OWN GREED...
IF NAKAJO HAD PICKED THE RIGHT ONE, I WOULD HAVE SIMPLY SHOVED THE TAPE IN HIS FACE AND DECLARED THE WIN VOID ON GROUNDS OF FRAUD
...AND FLUSHED HIS VICTORY RIGHT DOWN THE DRAIN
ARMED WITH THAT INFORMATION, UPON CLOSER INSPECTION, I FOUND A FAINT CHECK MARK
AFTER CONFIRMING THIS, THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD LOSE

... ...

I SIMPLY CIRCLED THE CHECK MARK HE'D MADE
THE FINAL TOUCH WAS TO LURE OUT NAKAJO'S SUSPICIONS
AND AFTER THAT, WELL...
O-HO-HO...
NOW I GET IT!

SO THAT'S WHY YA ABSOTIVELY POSILUTELY COULDN'T LOSE
A REAL EXCITIN' STORY
EVEN WITH BAD LUCK, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A DRAW
WELL AIN'T THAT SOMETHIN'
... ...
HEH...
NAKAJO CRACKED UP AND FELL TO PIECES
THAT'S ALL...

IT'S LIKE ISSUN-BOSHI'S MAGICAL MONEY MALLET'
AN INVINCIBLE SYSTEM
EH!
LET'S KEEP A GOOD THING GOIN'
AND LURE IN MORE SUCKERS WITH THAT PAINTING
THE PROFITS WOULD BE ENDLESS
WHADOYA SAY...?
I'M SORRY, BUT...
THE PAINTING TRICK WAS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY...
SO THERE WAS ONLY ONE SHOT AT IT...!
HUH...?
WHAT DID YA JUST SAY?
MORITA-HAN...!
THIS SCAM WAS A THRILL BECAUSE IT WAS SUCH A UNIQUE CHALLENGE...
BUT SPECIALLY TAILORED PSYCHO-LOGICAL TRICKS LIKE THIS...
...ARE NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN SIMPLY BE REPEATED
I'D... PROBABLY MAKE MISTAKES

[ARCHIVE NOT AN ELITE] A LEGENDARY JAPANESE HAMMER AWAKENING • ©2021 TO HOL ED & W-SHEP

I HAVE A HUNCH IT WOULD BLOW UP IN OUR FACES
WHAT'S MORE, PEOPLE WOULD EVENTUALLY START CATCHING ON TO US
UGH...!
THAT'S A MAJOR PROBLEM
AT ANY RATE, I DON'T THINK I WOULD TAKE IT AS SERIOUSLY THE SECOND TIME
I'M USED TO WORKING UNDER THE TENSION AND STRESS OF ONE-OFF GAMBLES
I'D BE RE-TRACING THE FLOW OF THE FIRST GAME SUB-CONSCIOUSLY

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YA SCREW UP OR NOT, 'CAUSE WE CAN'T LOSE
WHAT'S WITH YOU, MAN...!

I'M RETURNING THE CEZANNE
NO...
...!
HOW COULD YA LET THIS MONEY-MAKER GO TO WASTE RIGHT BEFORE YER EYES
YA GONNA END THIS BY SELLIN' OFF THE CEZANNE...?
EH...?!

YER DOIN' WHAT ...?!
YES, I AM...
WHOA, HOLD UP, SNAP OUT OF IT MAN
IT WAS A REAL PAIN IN THE ARSE TO STEAL, AMIRITE?
MORITA.. YA CAN'T POSSIBLY BE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS...!

I'VE GOT A FEW CHOICE WORDS TO SAY ABOUT YER LIL' PLAN TO CLOSE UP SHOP

IT'S FUCKING ABSURD...!

OH, AN'...

CHUMP CHANGE OR NOT, THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO NEED TO GIVE ANYTHIN' TO AOK!

THE GEEZER MIGHT BE BROKE, BUT HE COULD SAVE US THE HASSLE OF TRACKING DOWN RICH FOOLS TO SCAM

WE COULD USE 'IM FOR ALL HE'S WORTH AND THEN SOME!

I DIDN'T THINK NAKAJO'S OFFER WAS REALLY THAT BAD EITHER

...
...

BUT YER FOLLOW-THROUGH SUCKS

YER ABILITY TO PLAN AND TAKE ACTION MAY BE REAL TOP-NOTCH GENIUS-LIKE AN' ALL...

UGH, YER SO NAIVE

WELL, I GUESS THIS IS WHERE WE SPLIT

I STILL DON'T GET IT

AN' GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS

...
...
...

C'MON, MAN!
DON'T YA WANNA BE SWIMMIN' IN OCEANS OF CASH?
I RECKON PROFITS'D BE IN THE BILLIONS
OVER AND OVER...!
WHY THE HELL WOULD YA STOP NOW...?
...
...
I KNOW IT SOUNDS SLEAZY, BUT THAT'S WHAT I WANT...!
MORITA-HAN
I WANT MORE MONEY THAN I COULD BLOW IN A LIFETIME
I COULD GET A WHOLE LOTTA HOT CHICKS WITH THAT KINDA SPENDIN' POWER
ギュッ
WELL, I DO...

...
...
WELL...
DON'T YA GET WHAT I'M SAYIN'...?
SO WHAT'S YER DEAL...?
IT'S JUST...
I'M NO DIFFERENT THAN YOU
SAME HERE
I LOVE WOMEN, AND I KNOW THEY SWARM TO MONEY LIKE BEES TO HONEY
SO YEAH, I WANT MONEY
...?
I HAVE ONE MORE ASPIRATION ...

YES...
ANOTHER, HUH...?
I WANT TO SURPASS HIM
THERE'S AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE WHO GOES BY THE NAME "GIN"
BUT I'D LIKE TO BE KNOWN AS "KIN"
"KIN" .....?
I'M NOT SURE WHEN IT FIRST CAME TO MIND...
...?
AFTERWARD, I MUST BE ABLE TO MOVE BEYOND MY DESIRE FOR IT
TRANSCEND IT...
AND TO DO THAT, I'LL NEED TO AMASS NOTHING SHORT OF A KING'S RANSOM
BUT THAT ALONE ISN'T ENOUGH

J&P
THERE LIES ANOTHER WORLD
BEYOND THE REALM OF GREED AND DESIRE
THEN MY DREAM WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE...!
...
IF I CAN'T OBTAIN HIS LEVEL OF TRANSCENDENCE...
HE'S PROBABLY SEEN THROUGH TO IT COUNTLESS TIMES
AND I'VE MANAGED TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF IT TOO, BUT...
WELL...
WHAT MIGHT APPEAR...? WOULD YOU MEET DEMONS...? BUDDHA, PERHAPS...?
IF YOU COULD STARE INTO ITS DEPTHS LONG ENOUGH
YES...
ANOTHER WORLD, HUH...?

I WONDER IF
YOU MIGHT JUST SEE
A REFLECTION
OF YOURSELF . . . !
N-BOX
銀と金◆第31話◆完

第32話

蛇蝎の人生

A LOATHSOME LIFE

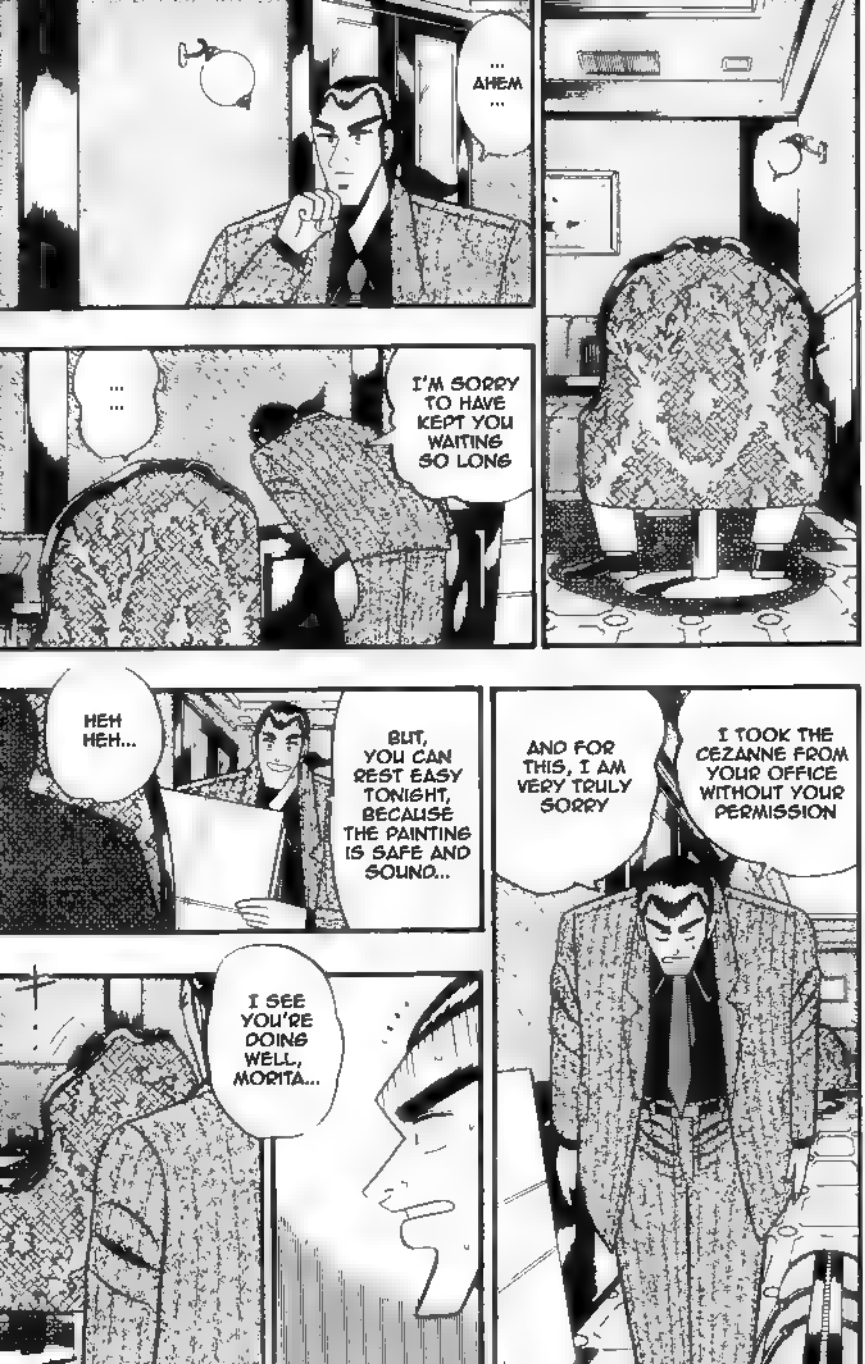
THAT NIGHT
AT 11:30 PM
AFTER PARTING WAYS WITH KAWATA, MORITA RETURNED TO HIS APARTMENT

200,000,000 AT THE AGE OF 21...!
TWO HUNDRED MILLION .....!
トゥルルルル...
ほぉ～...
IT'S MINE...!
IT'S MINE AT LAST...!

...YES, HELLO?
...
...
...
...
トゥルルル
WELL HELLO THERE, MORITA-KUN
WHO'S THIS...?
P-PRESI-DENT...?
HUH...?
IS THAT YOU, SIR...?
THIS IS DOMON FROM TEIJITSU BANK

YES!
Y-
WOULD YOU HAVE TIME TO MEET WITH ME TONIGHT?
THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU IN PERSON
...
...
I'LL BITE THE BULLET AND FESS UP
GUESS THERE'S NO WAY OUT OF IT
THE PAINTING IS SAFE, SO I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF THIS IN ONE PIECE...!
...I WAS GOING TO RETURN THE PAINTING TO HIM TOMORROW, BUT, I SUSPECT THAT WHAT HE WANTS TO "DISCUSS"...
...IS THAT HE NOTICED THAT THE REAL CEZANNE HAD BEEN SWAPPED WITH A FAKE
A CALL FROM PRESIDENT DOMON...!

Legend
WE HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU
YOU MUST BE MORITA-SAMA
DOMON-SAMA IS SITTING OVER AT THE TABLE ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ROOM
HE HAS BEEN WAITING FOR YOU


... AHEM ...
... ...
I'M SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING SO LONG
HEH HEH...
BUT, YOU CAN REST EASY TONIGHT, BECAUSE THE PAINTING IS SAFE AND SOUND...
I SEE YOU'RE DOING WELL, MORITA...
I TOOK THE CEZANNE FROM YOUR OFFICE WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION
AND FOR THIS, I AM VERY TRULY SORRY

HEY THERE, MORITA-KUN
HEH HEH...
GIN-SAN...!
PRESI-DENT...!
...
...
IF THERE'S ANYONE YOU SHOULD BE THANKING, IT'S HIM
AH...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR
OH, THERE'S NO NEED... YOU SEE, GIN-SAN PROMISED TO REIMBURSE ME IF THE PAINTING WAS LOST
YOU SHOULD THANK HIM, MORITA...
PRESIDENT DOMON NOTICED THAT THE CEZANNE HAD BEEN SWAPPED WITH A FAKE SOME TIME AGO...
BUT HE DECIDED TO LET YOU OFF THE HOOK UP UNTIL NOW, BECAUSE HE TRUSTED YOU

I'D LIKE YOU TO REPAY ME IN SOME OTHER WAY AT A LATER DATE
TRADING YOUR TALENT FOR MONEY WOULD BE A TERRIBLE WASTE
YOU OWE ME ONE
HEY NOW
WELL... I KNOW THIS ISN'T SUFFICIENT, BUT...
UM...
I DON'T WANT YOUR MONEY
HUH ...?
HA HA HA!
AH... THEN... WOULD YOU AT LEAST ALLOW ME TO DEPOSIT THIS TWO HUNDRED MILLION AT TEIJITSU BANK...
YES SIR...
I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT
HEH HEH...
OH... THAT'S TRUE...
THEY'D CALL THE COPS
WHAT YOU'VE PROPOSED JUST NOW IS SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN ONLY GET AWAY WITH AT TEIJITSU
NOW LISTEN UP, KID
BRINGING THIS MATTER UP AT ANY OTHER BANK WOULD BE A BIG MISTAKE

...WHY NOT...?
GIN-SAN WON'T LET ME
BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T DO THAT
HUH...?
AND I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO ACCEPT YOUR DEPOSIT
WELL, YOU SEEM TO BE IN A BIT OF A BIND, MORITA
IF YOU WANT YOUR MONEY TO GROW, LEAVING IT TO ROT IN A SAVINGS ACCOUNT IS THE LAST THING YOU SHOULD DO
KEEP YOUR MONEY CLOSE AT HAND
STOP BEING SO SHORT-SIGHTED
YOU'D PUT IT IN A BANK, OF ALL PLACES?
MORITA...
...GIN-SAN...!
SLEEP WITH IT...!

maxell

BURNED ...?
...AND EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, YOU'LL GET BURNED

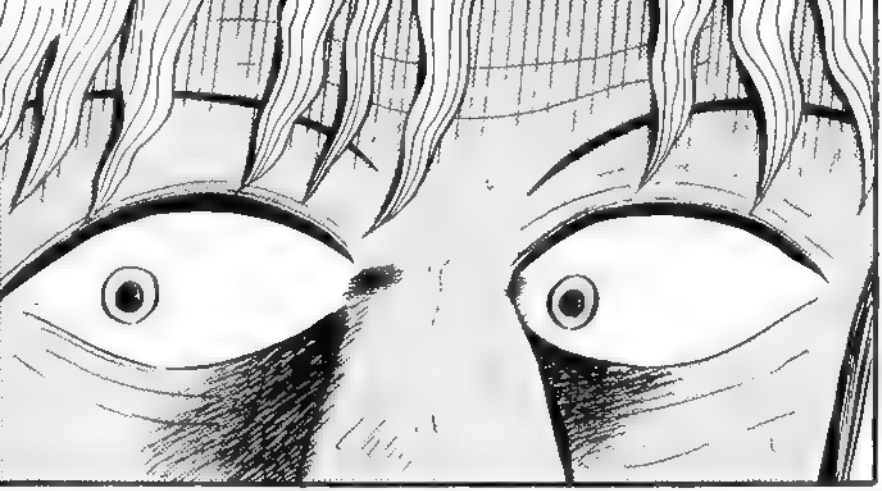
WILL BEGIN TO TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE...
SIMPLY BEING IN POSSESSION OF A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY

... ...?
... ...

WHEN YOU DO, YOU'LL UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF WHAT I JUST SAID...

AND RETURN TO YOUR APARTMENT EMPTY-HANDED
WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE THE MONEY WITH ME

カニ カニ
WHO THE HELL...?
A BREAK-IN...!



HAS HE LOST HIS MIND...?
...HE'S GOT A CRAZY LOOK IN HIS EYES

NAKA-JO...

HE CAME HERE TO STEAL MY MONEY...!

NAKAJO MUST HAVE RANSACKED MY PLACE, TOO...

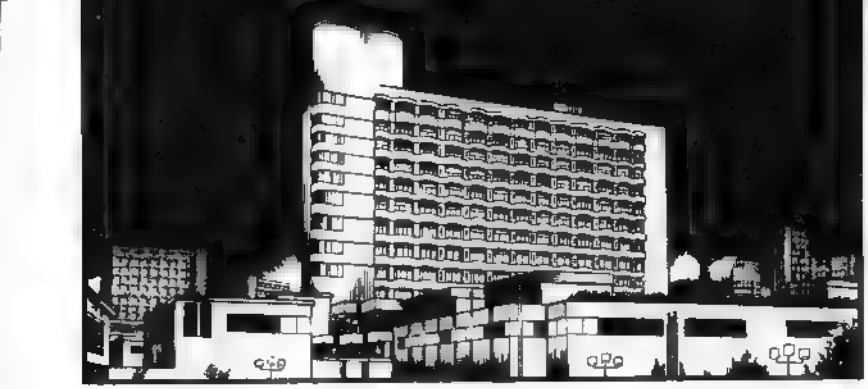
I GAVE BACK THE PAINTING
AND THE MONEY IS IN THE BANK...
I'VE GOT NOTHING!
I'M TELLING YOU, THERE'S NOTHING HERE...!
HEY ...!

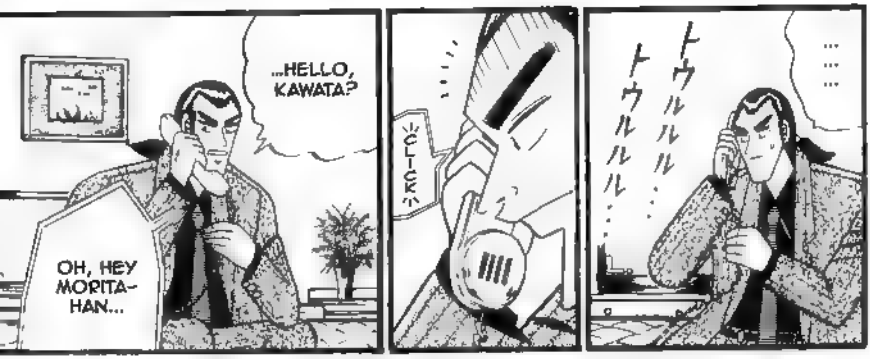
YOU CAN ATTACK ME, BUT YOU WON'T GET ANYTHING...!

NAKA-JO...!
NOTHING'S GOING TO CHANGE...!

バタ…
フラ
ハア…
ハア…
…
!?

HAVE A MONSTER LURKING JUST BENEATH THE SURFACE
WE ALL...
... ...
SAINTS CAN TURN INTO DEVILS, IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A FORTUNE TO SNAP
THE DEVILISHNESS OF MONEY... THE FRAGILITY OF MAN
IT'S SOMETHING THAT WORDS ALONE CAN'T CONVEY... YOU MUST EXPERIENCE IT FIRSTHAND
... ...
TO POSSESS MONEY IS TO SWIM OUT INTO A SEA OF TEMPTATION
HOWEVER, IF YOU CAN ENDURE IT, YOU CAN BECOME STRONGER

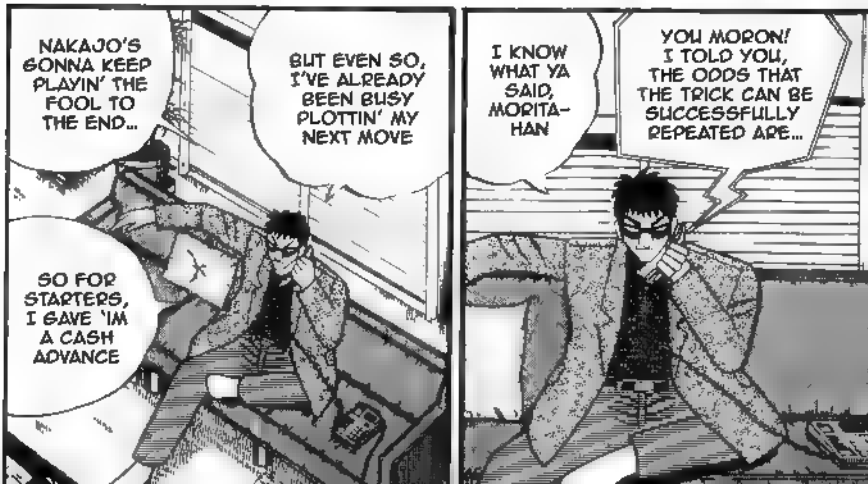



...HELLO, KAWATA?
OH, HEY MORITA-HAN...
CLICK!
トゥルルル...
トゥルルル...
...
...
...

HEH HEH HEH...
MORITA-HAN...
NAKAJO WAS JUST HERE
HUH...?
IF HE DOES, WATCH OUT!
NAKAJO HASN'T SHOWN UP AT YOUR PLACE YET, HAS HE?
HE'S ACTING REALLY WEIRD...!

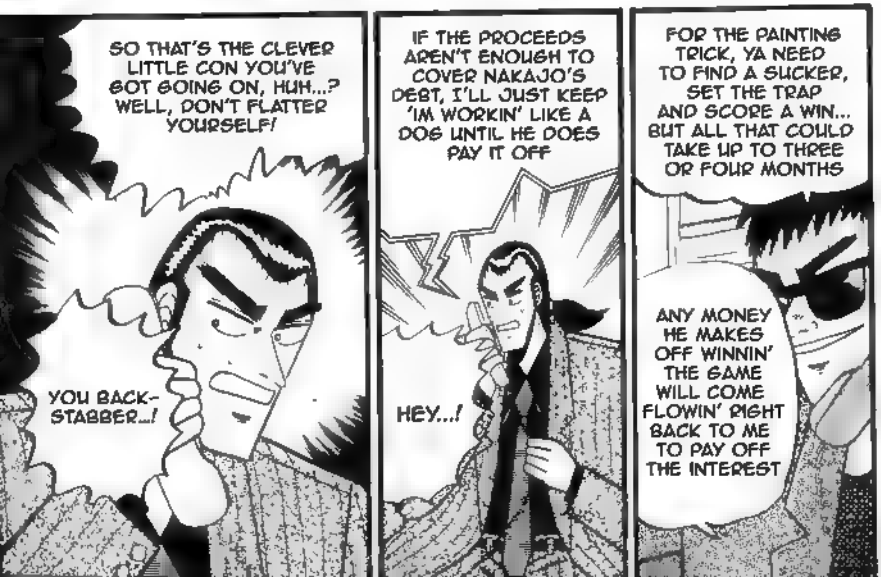
HE THANKED ME AND LEFT
THANKED YOU...?
WE HAD A NICE LIL' CHAT
AN' AFTER THAT...
NAH, NOTHIN' MUCH
ARE YOU OK?
DID ANYTHING HAPPEN...?

AND THEN WE DISCUSSED HOW WE COULD USE THAT TRICK TO MAKE SOME EASY MONEY
I FILLED 'IM IN ON THE SECRET BEHIND THE PAINTING SCAM
HE SURE DID...


NAKAJO'S GONNA KEEP PLAYIN' THE FOOL TO THE END...
SO FOR STARTERS, I GAVE 'IM A CASH ADVANCE
BUT EVEN SO, I'VE ALREADY BEEN BUSY PLOTTIN' MY NEXT MOVE
I KNOW WHAT YA SAID, MORITA-HAN
YOU MORON! I TOLD YOU, THE ODDS THAT THE TRICK CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY REPEATED ARE...

HEH
HEH
HEH
MORITA-HAN, THAT RATE IS TOTALLY INSANE
HE REALLY SHOULDDA KNOWN BETTER...
BUT... THE RATE I'M CHARGIN' 'IM IS 10% EVERY FIVE DAYS
WHAT ...?!
...
...
...
IT'S JUST A LOAN FOR FIFTY MILLION

IT'LL BE FOUR HUNDRED MILLION
IN 80 DAYS, IT'LL QUADRUPLE, AND IN FOUR MONTHS...
THE PRINCIPAL IS GONNA DOUBLE IN ABOUT 40 DAYS
WITH THE INTEREST RATE COMPOUNDIN' EVERY FIVE DAYS


SO THAT'S THE CLEVER LITTLE CON YOU'VE GOT GOING ON, HUH...? WELL, DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF!
YOU BACK-STABBER...!
IF THE PROCEEDS AREN'T ENOUGH TO COVER NAKAJO'S DEBT, I'LL JUST KEEP 'IM WORKIN' LIKE A DOG UNTIL HE DOES PAY IT OFF
HEY...!
FOR THE PAINTING TRICK, YA NEED TO FIND A SUCKER, SET THE TRAP AND SCORE A WIN... BUT ALL THAT COULD TAKE UP TO THREE OR FOUR MONTHS
ANY MONEY HE MAKES OFF WINNIN' THE GAME WILL COME FLOWIN' RIGHT BACK TO ME TO PAY OFF THE INTEREST

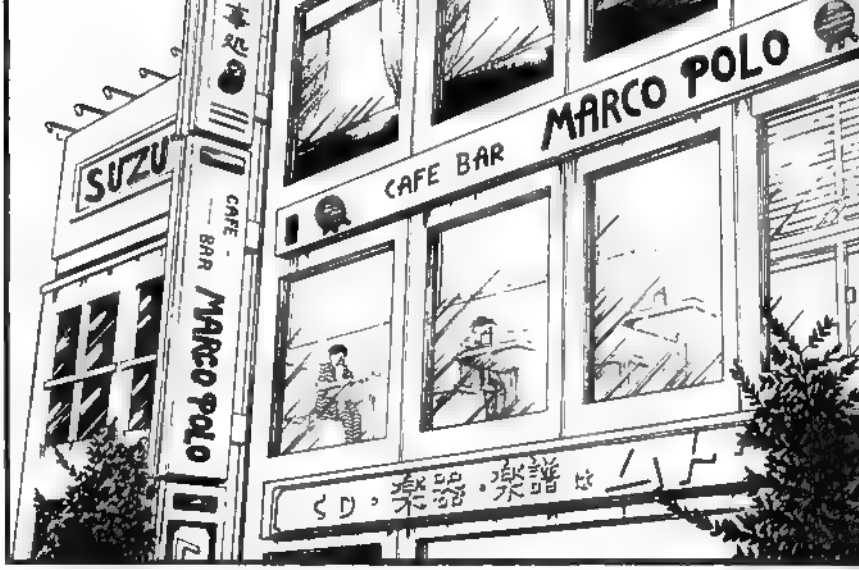
FACE IT, IT'S A FACT...!
YOU'LL RISK YOUR LIFE FOR MONEY
ガチャ
AND IF NAKAJO DOES GO ALL CRAZY ON ME
I DON'T CARE ...!
I CAN ALWAYS TAKE 'IM OUT...!
WELL, WHATEVER, MAN...!
BWAHAHA...!

GONE MAD...!
……
THEY'VE ALL...
命と金◆第32話◆完

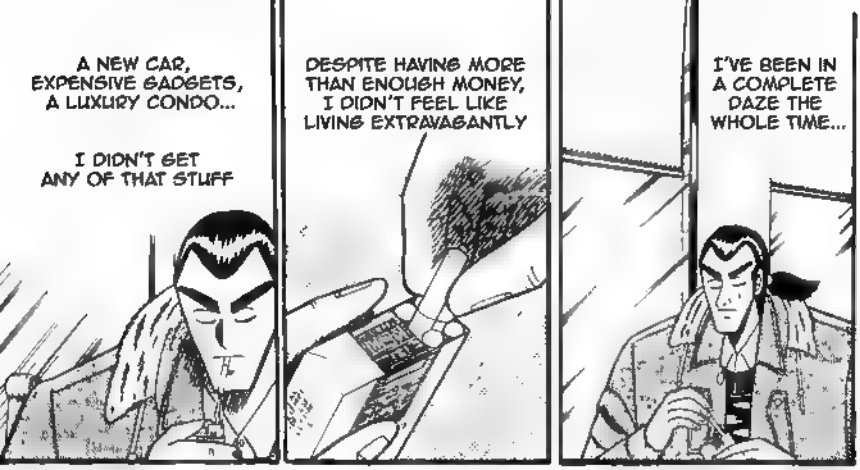
第1话

男の財産

A MAN'S WEALTH


SUZU
CAFE · BAR
MARCO POLO
CAFE BAR
MARCO POLO

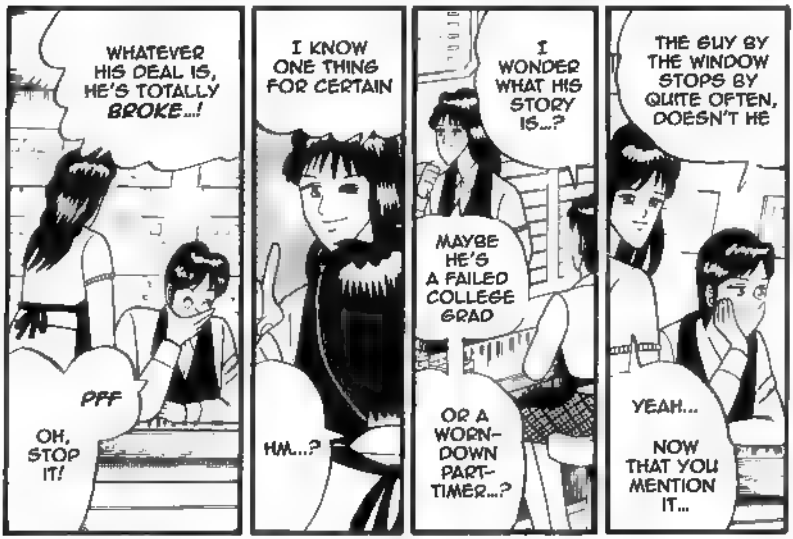
SINCE THE "GOLDEN BRIDGE" GAMBLE...
ONE MONTH HAS PASSED...

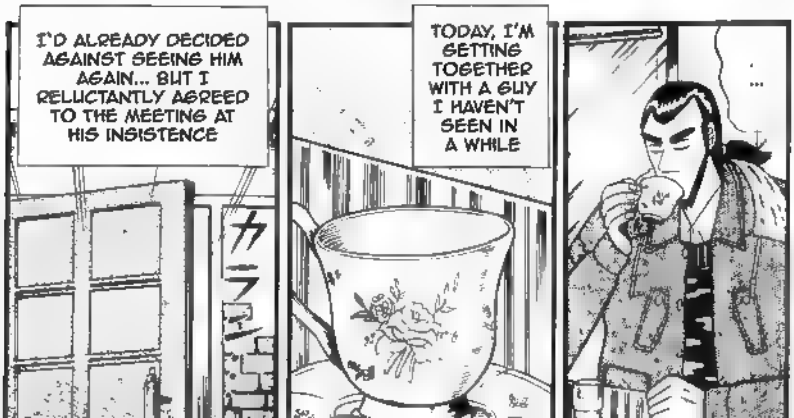

A NEW CAR, EXPENSIVE GADGETS, A LUXURY CONDO...
I DIDN'T GET ANY OF THAT STUFF
DESPITE HAVING MORE THAN ENOUGH MONEY, I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE LIVING EXTRAVAGANTLY
I'VE BEEN IN A COMPLETE DAZE THE WHOLE TIME...

IS COMBAT STRENGTH
THE GREATEST POWER MONEY CAN PROVIDE
MONEY IS YOUR FIGHTING POTENTIAL...
...TO LET THOSE THINGS DECREASE MY FINANCIAL LEVERAGE
I DION'T WANT

I DON'T WANT TO SQUANDER THE ASSETS I'VE GAINED...!
BE IT FIFTY MILLION OR A HUNDRED MILLION, IT ALL TAKES TIME AND EFFORT TO OBTAIN
AND WITHOUT FUNDING, MY HANDS ARE TIED...
IF THE WORLD IS A BATTLEFIELD
MONEY IS THE AMMUNITION
YOU'D BE A FOOL TO CARELESSLY FIRE OFF YOUR FEW REMAINING BULLETS WHILE THE BATTLE IS STILL RAGING

HM...?
HEY, HEY


WHATEVER HIS DEAL IS, HE'S TOTALLY BROKE...!
PFF
OH, STOP IT!
I KNOW ONE THING FOR CERTAIN
HM...?
I WONDER WHAT HIS STORY IS...?
MAYBE HE'S A FAILED COLLEGE GRAD
OR A WORN-DOWN PART-TIMER...?
THE GUY BY THE WINDOW STOPS BY QUITE OFTEN, DOESN'T HE
YEAH...
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...


I'D ALREADY DECIDED AGAINST SEEING HIM AGAIN... BUT I RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO THE MEETING AT HIS INSISTENCE
カラン
TODAY, I'M GETTING TOGETHER WITH A GUY I HAVEN'T SEEN IN A WHILE
...

MORITA-HAN...!
YO...!
IT WAS A JOB OFFER
...
...
SO, HOW YA BEEN...?
I'M AFRAID NOT...
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN CONVINCE YA...?
I WAS ONLY MEETING HIM TO TURN THE OFFER DOWN, OF COURSE
...
...
I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE TAKING IT

HMPF...
THEN... COULD YA LEND ME SOME CASH INSTEAD?
NO...
WELL, I GUESS THAT'S IT THEN...
GUYS, COULD YA HEAD ON OUT...?
BUT LEMME GIVE YA A LITTLE ADVICE
THAT'S A REAL SHAME, MAN...
MORITA...
YEAH...?
...
...

BUT'CHA CAN ALSO SHORT SELL STOCKS ON MARGIN THROUGH A BROKER, IF YER CONFIDENT THE PRICE'LL DROP IN YER FAVOR
STOCKS'RE TYPICALLY BOUGHT "LOW" AND SOLD "HIGH" TO MAKE A PROFIT
WHY?
IF YA WANNA GET IN ON ITOU FOODS' STOCK, NOW'S THE TIME TO DO IT
...
...
ITOU FOODS' STOCK IS GONNA TAKE A DIVE REAL SOON
SIX HUNDRED MILLION... TO A BILLION
YER BUYING POWER WILL INCREASE THREE TO FIVE TIMES THIS WAY...
SO AN INITIAL INVESTMENT OF TWO HUNDRED MIL' WOULD BECOME...
SOME-THING LIKE THAT
YEAH...
SEE YA LATER...
A DIVE, HUH...
DID YOU GET A TIP...?
HEH HEH...

HAVING COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT WHAT KAWATA HAD SAID...
THEN, ON A DAY TWO WEEKS LATER
CAFE — BAR MARCO POLO

POISON AT ITOU FOODS...!
1993年 平成5年 1月19日
毒物混入
イトウ食品
朝刊
LOCAL RESIDENTS IN A STATE OF PANIC...!
"POISONED UDON" FOUND AT THREE STORES
A TIP-OFF CALL WAS RECEIVED BY THE MEDIA...!
KAWATA...
COULD IT BE...
BUT...
THIS IS JUST LIKE THE INCIDENT THAT HAPPENED A FEW YEARS AGO..
IT'S THE SAME...

IF HE'D HAVE FOLLOWED UP ON KAWATA'S "ADVICE" AND INVESTED HIS 200 MILLION
PRIOR TO THIS, THE STOCK HAD BEEN BULLISH, BUT WITHIN A WEEK, IT FELL OVER 30%
HIS NET GAIN WOULD HAVE BEEN ABOUT 300 MILLION
AND AS A RESULT, THE STOCK'S MARKET PRICE PLUMMETED
ITOU FOODS' MANAGEMENT TROUBLES WERE ALSO BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY THE SCANDAL
イトウ食品
DROPPING IN AT ALL THE LIKELY PLACES, UNTIL...
NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, I SEARCHED FOR KAWATA

I FOUND HIM...!
FIVE DAYS LATER...
WAS IT YOU...?
I HAVE JUST ONE THING TO ASK...
YA LOOK ALL RILED UP...
WHASSA MATTER, MORTA

...THAT'S RIGHT...!
...
...
EEEK!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU...!
URGH!

SIR!
ARE YOU OK...?
A'HM OK, A'HM OK
FUCKIN' PUNK...!
JACK-ASS...!
...
...
WHAT YOU DID WAS WRONG...
...WHAT THE HELL DID YA DO THAT FOR!

UDON THAT HAS "CONTAINS POISON" WRITTEN ON IT...
THINK ABOUT IT...!
...WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD EVEN TOUCH THE STUFF...!
DIED...? MORON!
IF YOU WEREN'T SO LUCKY, PEOPLE COULD HAVE DIED...
THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS...!
HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES THE AUTO INDUSTRY KILL EVERY DAY...?
OVER TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE DIE IN CAR ACCIDENTS EVERY YEAR...!
BUT, EVEN IF A FEW PEOPLE *HAD* DIED, SO WHAT...?
YA THINK YER RIGHT, HUH...?
SO TELL ME, MORITA...!
WHAT'S "RIGHT-NESS"...?
HOW COME YER THE ONE WHO'S RIGHT?
WHY ARE YA LAYIN' THE BLAME ON ME...?

"RIGHTNESS" IS TOTALLY SUBJECTIVE...
THINK ABOUT IT
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF OPINION...!
FRIGGIN' IDIOT...
...
...

I MAY BE A CROOK
BUT I DON'T TALK SMACK
GUYS LIKE YOU WHO GO AROUND PROCLAIMIN' THEIR RIGHT-EOUSNESS...
YER JUST SHOVIN' YER OWN OPINIONS DOWN OTHER PEOPLE'S THROATS
PEOPLE ARE "WRONG" AN' PEOPLE ARE "RIGHT"
JUST WHERE DO YA GET OFF TALKIN' LIKE THAT
YA OUGHTTA BE ASHAMED OF YERSELF...!
WHO IS THAT GUY...
HMF...

A REAL NUMB-SKULL...

BUT YA STILL DIDN'T KNOW WHAT'CHA WERE GETTIN' YERSELF INTO...!
YA GOT ALL THAT TALENT...

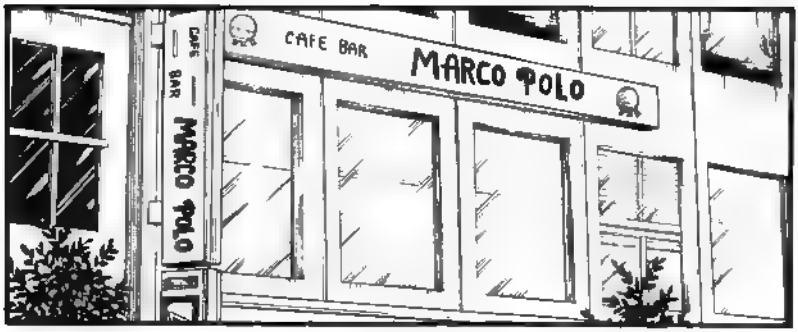
...JUST A PATHETIC, WANNABE CRIMINAL...
AIN'T THAT RIGHT...?

YA GOTTA BE KIDDIN' ME...!

DO YA HONESTLY BELIEVE YA NEED COMPASSION TO GET AHEAD IN THIS WORLD...?
...THAT YA NEED A CONSCIENCE TO BECOME A GREAT MAN...?

ALL YA NEED IS MONEY...
...IT'S THE ONLY THING YA CAN RELY ON...
RIGHT... MORITA...?

PEDE
MONEY...
MONEY...
MONEY...
ALL ALONG...
YOU WERE WRONG...
KAWATA...



ALL YA NEED IS MONEY...!

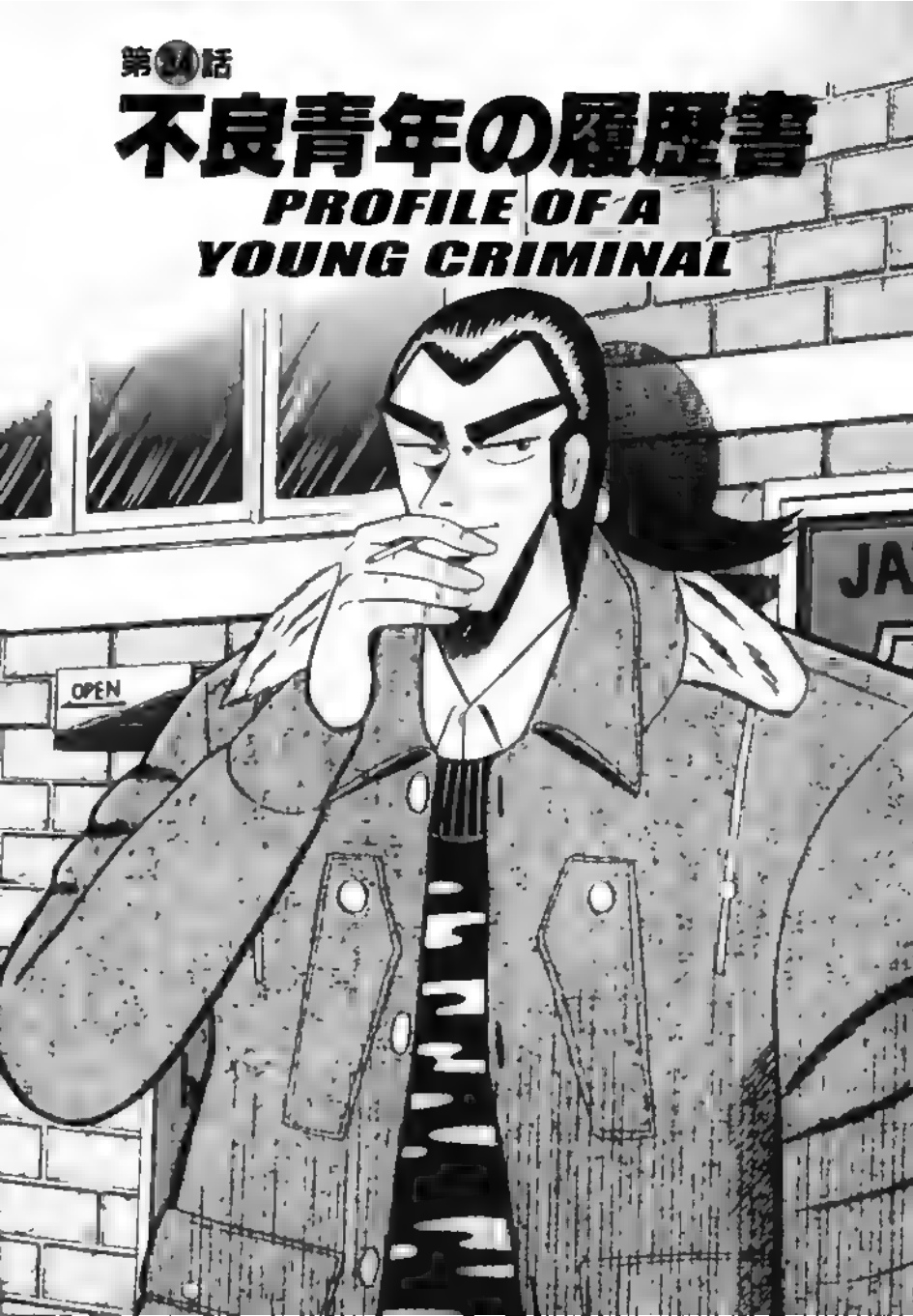
I'M GLAD THAT NOBODY DIED...
...
...IT'S THE ONLY THING YA CAN RELY ON...
IS YOU...
BUT THE ONE WHO'S PROBABLY THE MOST RELIEVED ABOUT THAT OUTCOME...
...THAT'S GREAT...
RIGHT... MORITA...?
...?
WERE YOU IN A FIGHT, SIR...?
WHAT A RELIEF.
YOU'RE NOT SO COLD-HEARTED AFTER ALL...

YEAH...
YOU LOOK PRETTY ROUGHED UP, SO...
EH-HEH
IT WASN'T ANYTHING SERIOUS
NAH...
WERE THERE A LOT OF PEOPLE INVOLVED ...?
IT WAS JUST...
A FALLING OUT BETWEEN BROTHERS...
銀と金◆第33話◆完

第34話

不良青年の履歴書

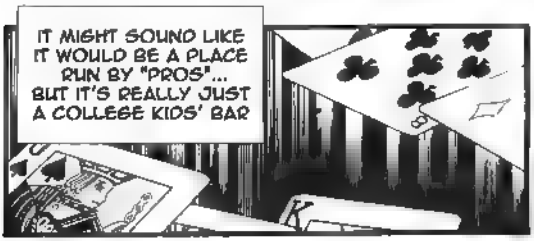
PROFILE OF A YOUNG CRIMINAL



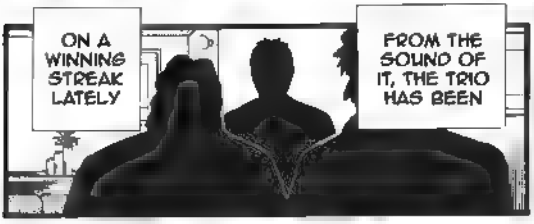
HOTEL
白雲閣
THERE'S BEEN A CURIOUS TURN OF EVENTS...
MIO ITOU
THIS GIRL WORKS AS A WAITRESS AT THE CAFÉ I FREQUENT
...
...
I MIGHT BE GETTING THE WRONG IMPRESSION, BUT...
SHE SEEMS TO BE TOTALLY ATTRACTED TO ME
SO TELL ME...
THAT BAG YOU ALWAYS HAVE WITH YOU
WHAT'S IN IT?

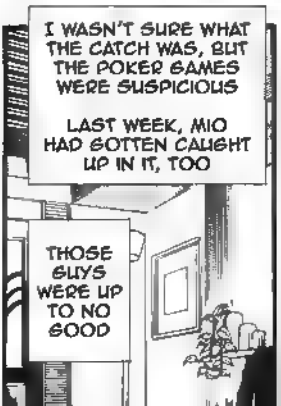
HMM
I'M... NOT ABLE TO RETURN TO MY APARTMENT AT THE MOMENT
JUST A FEW DAYS' WORTH OF CLOTHES, BOOKS AND WHATNOT
OH, THIS...?
YEAH
IT WAS STUFFED FULL OF CASH
NEEDLESS TO SAY, THAT WAS A BIG LIE...
... ...
AND I KEPT IT WITH ME AT ALL TIMES
I'D DECIDED TO FOLLOW GIN-SAN'S ADVICE
THEN WHY AM I GOING OUT WITH HER TONIGHT, YOU ASK?
WELL...
SO IF I FEEL THAT WAY
IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE MY LAST OPPORTUNITY. I CAN'T AFFORD TO WASTE ANY MORE TIME
FOR MY NEXT BIG BREAK
I WAS ALWAYS ON THE LOOK-OUT...
IT'S BECAUSE OF A RATHER INTRIGUING TRIO SHE TOLD ME ABOUT
IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL, MIO... BUT I CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH WOMEN RIGHT NOW

CLUB Z
CLUB "Z" IN SHIBUYA


IT MIGHT SOUND LIKE IT WOULD BE A PLACE RUN BY "PROS"... BUT IT'S REALLY JUST A COLLEGE KIDS' BAR

HIGH-STAKES POKER TOURNAMENTS ARE HELD HERE ON THE WEEKENDS


ON A WINNING STREAK LATELY
FROM THE SOUND OF IT, THE TRIO HAS BEEN


I WASN'T SURE WHAT THE CATCH WAS, BUT THE POKER GAMES WERE SUSPICIOUS
LAST WEEK, MIO HAD GOTTEN CAUGHT UP IN IT, TOO
THOSE GUYS WERE UP TO NO GOOD

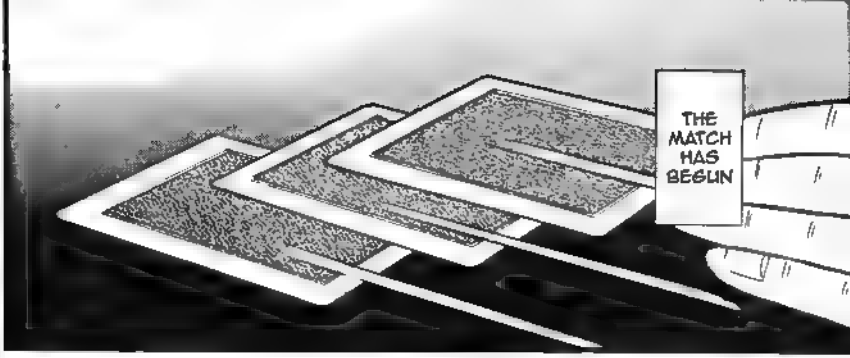
AT LEAST, THAT SEEMED TO BE THE GIST OF IT

RUMOR HAS IT THAT THEY SMOOTH-TALK GIRLS INTO PLAYING A GAME OF POKER
AND THEN TAKE ALL THEIR MONEY... AS WELL AS THEIR BODIES

THEY'RE ALL HEIRS TO CORPORATIONS IN THE FIRST SECTION OF THE TOKYO STOCK EXCHANGE
THREE OF JAPAN'S MOST NOTABLE RICH KIDS, AS IT WERE
THE PRESIDENT OF ARITA REAL ESTATE'S ELDEST SON, SHINICHI ARITA
THE CEO OF SAIJOU CONSTRUCTION'S SECOND SON, SHINYA SAIJOU
AND THE PRESIDENT OF SEIWA PHARMA-CEUTICALS' ELDEST SON, MASATO OKABE
IT WAS A FAIRLY ORDINARY STORY...
BUT THE TRIO'S PERSONAL PROFILES MADE IT CONSIDERABLY MORE INTERESTING
I MIGHT GET A CHANCE TO FAMILIARIZE MYSELF WITH THEIR FACES
HAVING THAT KNOWLEDGE COULD PROVE TO BE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE
I CAME HERE TONIGHT HOPING THAT...
MORITA-KUN, THEY'RE HERE...
THAT'S THEM
MORITA-KUN, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY GOOD FRIENDS YUKARI AND AKIHO... THEY'VE BOTH CHIPPED IN CASH FOR TONIGHT'S FACE-OFF WITH THE TRIO
OH, HEY...

WELL, I'M JUST TAGGING ALONG, SO I PROBABLY WON'T JOIN IN
UM...
WHAT'S THIS...? WILL YOUR BOYFRIEND BE PLAYING WITH US TODAY...?
YO!
EEGH
NOT THAT HE COULD, MIND YOU... THE STAKES ARE QUITE HIGH
THAT'S A VERY SMART MOVE ON HIS PART
poor...
WELL, I DARE SAY...
OH... I SEE

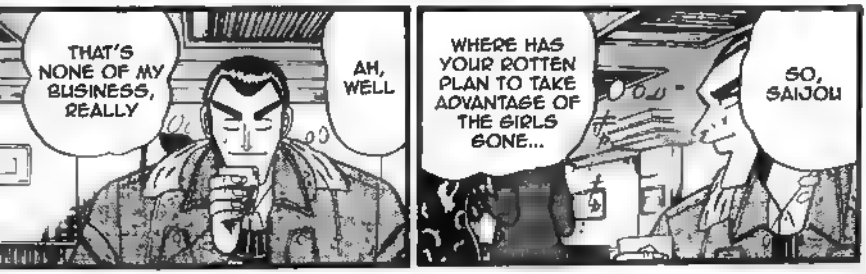
FREAK OUT...? WHY YOU...!
HEY, JUST LET IT GO
IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THIS GAME SERIOUSLY, WE'RE DONE
WE WOULDN'T HAVE COME ALONG IF WE KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO FREAK OUT
THAT'S RIGHT!
HUH...?
KNOCK IT OFF, MIO!
THAT GUY REALLY PISSES ME OFF..
AND WHAT'S THERE TO GAIN BY INSULTING THOSE GUYS?
WHAT WILL YOU DO IF THEY DECIDE TO LEAVE?
THE MAJORITY OF TONIGHT'S CAMPAIGN FUNDS IS MADE UP WITH THEIR MONEY
IF YOU'D RATHER WASTE ALL YOUR MONEY
TREATING THEM TO SUSHI AS AN APOLOGY INSTEAD, THEN GO RIGHT AHEAD, BE MY GUEST


THE MATCH HAS BEGUN

IT SEEMED LIKE A NORMAL GAME
AT FIRST ...

THE TRIO WAS LOSING BADLY
AND THE GIRLS' WINS KEPT PILING UP
IT SEEMED LIKE LUCK WAS ALL ON THE GIRLS' SIDE TONIGHT
BUT TO TELL THE TRUTH
WITH WINS ...AND LOSSES

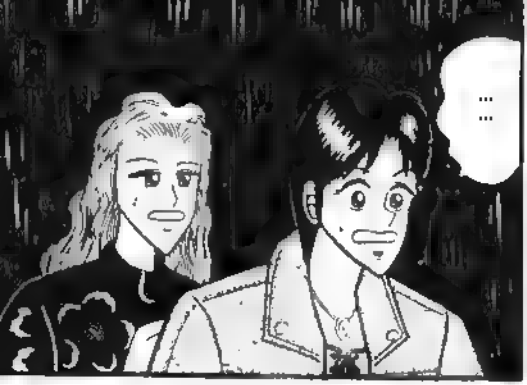
AREN'T THEY DOING WELL
MY, MY...
...
...
WE WON! WE WON AGAIN...!
WOO-HOO!
LUCKY!


THAT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS, REALLY
AH, WELL
WHERE HAS YOUR ROTTEN PLAN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GIRLS GONE...
SO, SAIJOU

HM...?
...
...
THE TABLES HAD TURNED
BUT BY THE TIME 11PM ROLLED AROUND
THE POKER MATCH HAD BEGUN AT 1PM...
HOW-EVER

320,000 TO 270,000...!
AND I HAVE A HAND, SO...
...WHAT SHOULD WE DO...?
WELL...
IT'S TOO LATE TO BACK DOWN NOW
I'LL SEE YOU
FIFTY THOUSAND. SO THERE, WE'RE EVEN
CALL!
HEH...

NO...
THIS IS ALL WE HAVE, SO WE'VE GOT NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO CALL
WHAT'S GOING ON...?
CALL, I SAID... CALL!
?
HEH HEH HEH...
YOUR LACK OF FUNDS IS OF NO CONCERN TO US
THAT'S ENTIRELY YOUR PROBLEM
I'LL RAISE YOU....!
THEN LOGIC WOULD DICTATE
THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE FOLDED, RATHER THAN CALLED
IF YOU CAN'T RAISE
...
...
YOU SEE, THERE'S NO SET LIMIT ON HOW HIGH THE BETTING CAN GO
HUH ...?


...
...

TEN MILLION...!

ARE YOU KIDDING ME? THAT KIND OF MONEY... THERE'S NO WAY WE'D BRING THAT MUCH...

A-

NO...

WHAT'S THE POINT OF MAKING A RAISE LIKE THAT... AREN'T YOU ASHAMED...?
YEAH, YEAH!

ARE YOU FOLDING THEN...?
OF COURSE NOT...!
SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, WHOEVER HAS THE MOST MONEY WINS, HUH...?

IF YOU DO, IN EXCHANGE, THIS TEN MILLION WILL BE YOURS
IF YOU GIRLS WILL AGREE TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH US
WHA...?
BUT LUCKY FOR YOU, I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT AN IOU
WE CAN WRITE IT OUT ON A SCRAP OF PAPER RIGHT NOW...
BUT ONLY
THAT'S JUST THE WAY THAT "SKY HIGH POKER" IS PLAYED, YOU SEE
IT'S UNFORTUNATE WHEN POOR PEOPLE CHOOSE TO GET INVOLVED
THAT'S A PRETTY SWEET DEAL...!
IF YOU WIN, YOU'LL EACH RECEIVE OVER THREE MILLION
MIO...
...
...
THINK IT OVER
YOU HAVE TEN MINUTES TO DECIDE
HA HA HA HA...
HA HA HA...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO ...?
WELL, UH...
IN THAT CASE...

I WON'T LET YOU PRESSURE THEM INTO ACCEPTING THAT KIND OF IOU
WHAT DO YOU WANT...!
HEH HEH HEH...
STAY OUT OF THIS...!
AND SINCE YOU'VE GIVEN THEM A TIME LIMIT OF TEN MINUTES..
WHAT THE HELL IS YOUR PROBLEM

?
UP TO MY ELBOW
I'LL RAISE YOU...!
HUH...?

...
...
:GASP:
THEY'RE THE REAL THING...
YOU'RE SURE THEY'RE LEGIT...?
...
...
IS THIS A JOKE...?
THESE HAVE TO BE FAKE
BUT... HOW...?
TH- THEY'RE REAL...

さわ
さわ

WHAT GAVE YOU THAT IDEA...?
IDIOT
HA HA HA!
WHICH CORPO-RATION DOES YOUR FATHER WORK FOR...!?

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT...
I AM WHO I AM
YOU CAN DIG THROUGH MY FAMILY RECORDS AS MUCH AS YOU WANT, BUT YOU WON'T FIND ANYONE WHO'S LINKED TO MONEY
I'M SORRY BUT
...
...

GET LOST, YOU CREEP...!
GAME OVER

HUH...?
WHICH CORPO-RATION ...?
YOU BAS-TARD..
TCH
...
...
...

BUT THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN DO THAT IN TEN MINUTES
IF YOU WERE TO PLEAD WITH YOUR PARENTS, I'M GUESSING THAT YOU COULD GET MUCH MORE THAN JUST THIS...

MY NAME IS MORITA TETSUO
THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW...!
MORITA ...!
NEXT WEEK, WE'RE HAVING A RE-MATCH... RIGHT HERE...!
HEH HEH HEH...
DAMN YOU...
...
...
...
SO PISS OFF ALREADY... IF YOU CAN'T PONY UP THE MONEY, YOU'RE NOT WORTH MY TIME...!
=GULP=

BUT, IS THAT OKAY...? SURE YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUN HOME AND TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR DADDY FIRST...?
WILL YOU SHUT UP...!
YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A LOT MORE THAN TEN MILLION
HOWEVER, IF YOU WANT A REMATCH...
ANY-WAY...
...
...
IT'LL BE WINNER TAKES ALL
THAT'S FINE BY ME
YOU'RE ON...!
NEXT WEEK...
A PROMISE IT IS...!
ALL RIGHT
...
...

WE'RE GOING TO BRING THIS ASSHOLE DOWN
...
...
WE'LL SHOW HIM...!
AND GETS AWAY WITH IT
NOBODY MESSES WITH US

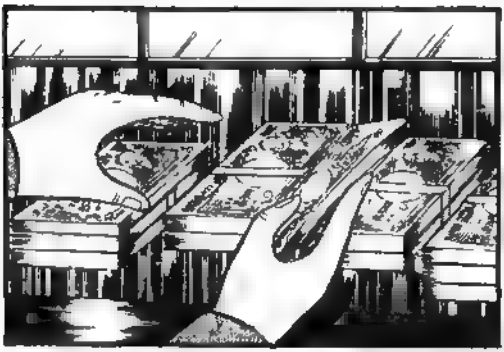
WE'LL CRUSH HIM...!
鷹と金◆第34話◆完

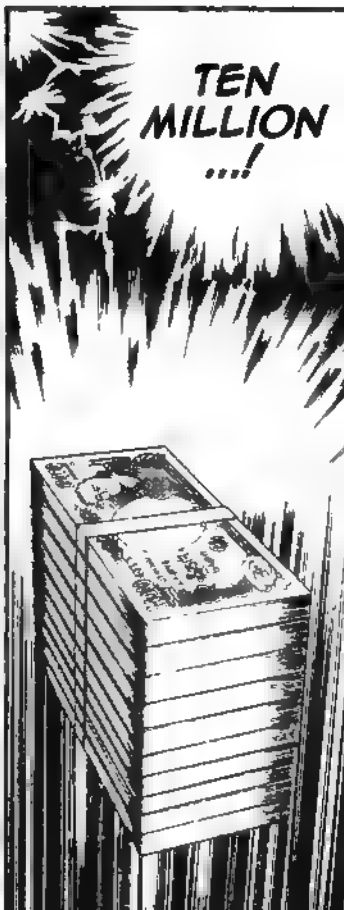
第●話

ポーカー勝負

POKER GAMBLE

THEAVEN
CLUB Z
FROM TONIGHT'S WIN AGAINST THE TRIO
WAS...
THE PAYOFF

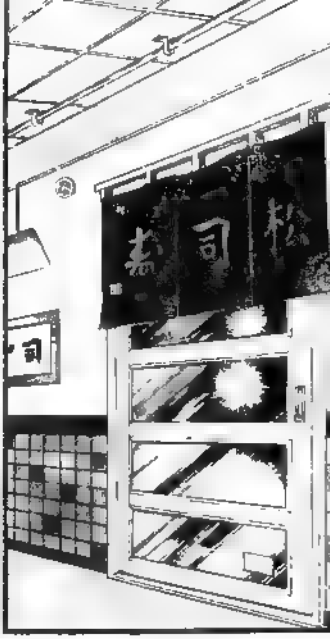



TEN MILLION ...!

THERE... THAT MAKES FOUR EQUAL SHARES...
HM?

OMG!
IT'S ALL YOURS
NO WAY..! YOU'RE GIVING THAT MUCH TO ALL OF US...?
EH...?
THAT'S RIGHT...
JUST TAKE IT...
AH... YOU SEE, I...
HERE YOU GO...
FOR REAL...?
OH WOW..!
BAR-KEEP
EEE~!
YA-HOO~!
AND A DRINK TO CELEBRATE OUR WIN...?
LET'S GO...!
SO, LADIES?
HOW ABOUT WE HEAD OUT FOR DINNER
WELL THEN

YES...?
I'D LIKE TO ASK A FAVOR OF YOU...



WHO'S HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE PLAYING POKER WITH THESE GUYS...
IF THERE'S ANYONE ELSE YOU KNOW
I'D LIKE TO MEET THEM

THEY'LL PROBABLY BE KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH OVER ME FROM HERE ON OUT
I NEED TO COLLECT AS MUCH INFORMATION AS I CAN BEFORE THE NIGHT IS OVER

YES...
YOU MEAN TONIGHT...? HERE...?

...

THE TRIO'S POKER GAME APPEARED TO BE UNREMARKABLE, FOR THE MOST PART
...
...
ACCORDING TO THE GIRLS
HOWEVER, AFTER THE GAME PROGRESSED TO A CERTAIN POINT, THEY WOULD NEVER LOSE
...AND I HAD A GOOD HAND, TOO, YOU KNOW...?
THAT'S SUPER SUSPICIOUS, ISN'T IT...

WELL YEAH, BUT, IF I DIDN'T AGREE, HE SAID HE'D JUST FIND SOME OTHER GIRL TO PLAY AGAINST
YOU LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THAT...?
WHAT ...?
BECAUSE HE WOULD ONLY PLAY WITH THE ONES THAT HE BROUGHT
I WAS WARY OF THE CARDS
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU COULD TELL JUST BY TAKING A GLANCE AT THEM...!
BUT I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING ODD ABOUT THEM...
HE DID LET ME TAKE A LOOK AT THE CARDS, THOUGH
ARE YOU KIDDING ME...?
OH...?
I DON'T THINK THE CARDS ARE SUSPECT AT ALL
NAH...
SAY... MORITA-KUN, THAT SEEMS KINDA SHADY, DOESN'T IT

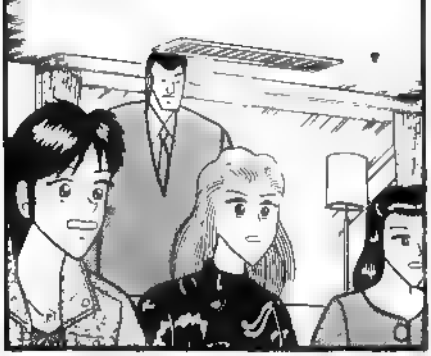
IF THE CARDS TRULY HAD BEEN TAMPERED WITH, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE BEHAVED THAT WAY
IF IT WERE REVEALED THAT THE CARDS HAD BEEN MARKED, THAT EVIDENCE WOULD BE DAMNING
THEREFORE... I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHERE THE TRICK LIES
PUTTING UP A FUSS OVER SOMETHING LIKE THAT MAKES ME WONDER IF IT ISN'T JUST A DIVERSIONARY TACTIC
"THE CARDS ARE SUSPI-CIOUS"
THAT'S WHAT ANYONE WOULD THINK
SO
WELL, I THINK THERE IS ONE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR METHOD IS YET
HM...
SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT THERE ISN'T A TRICK...?
NONE OF THEM LOOKED UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHETHER THEY'D WIN OR LOSE
THEY WERE TOTALLY CALM...
WEREN'T WHAT YOU'D EXPECT THEM TO BE
TOWARD THE END OF THE GAME, WHEN SAIJOU PUT DOWN THAT TEN MILLION IN A BID TO FORCE YOU INTO HIS TRAP, THE EXPRESSIONS ON THEIR FACES...

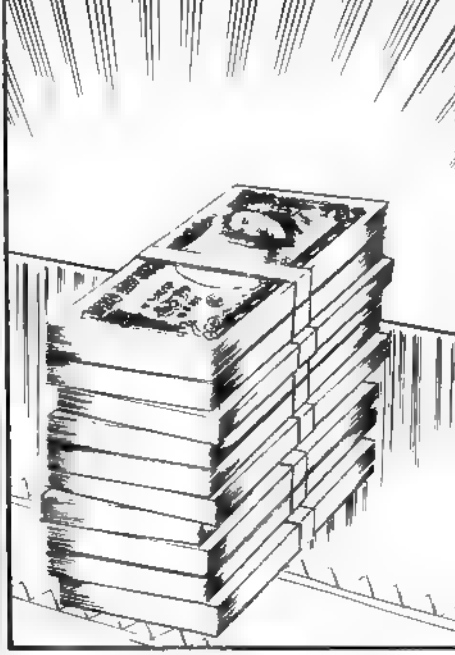
IT'S GOT TO BE
SO IT REALLY IS A SCAM, THEN...?
... ...
THEY LOOKED LIKE THEY KNEW WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD BE VICTORIOUS
THERE'S ANOTHER THING I'M CURIOUS ABOUT
BUT...
PULLING A TRICK LIKE THAT ON SOMEONE IS A PRETTY INTENSE EXPERIENCE
SPEAKING FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE
SOMETHING'S BROKEN...
THEY'RE EITHER EXPERTS AT THIS... OR ELSE...
NORMALLY, YOUR COMPOSURE WOULD START TO CRACK UNDER THE PRESSURE
OH...

THEIR ENTIRE LIVES...
THEY'VE PROBABLY NEVER LOST TO ANYONE...
THEY NEVER LOSE...
MAYBE...
BROKEN ...?
WHAT MORITA WAS TRYING TO SAY
?
THE GIRLS DIDN'T REALLY FOLLOW
AT THE TIME
?
THEY WOULD COME TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF HIS WORDS...
WHEN THEY RECEIVED A SUMMONS FROM THE TRIO...
BUT TWO DAYS LATER

HEY...!
SEE, THANKS FOR WAITING...
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE, BRINGING US HERE...!
"WAITING" FOR YOU, MY ASS...!
YES, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO KNOW
WE'RE YOUR ENEMIES ...!
WE'RE ON MORITA-KUN'S SIDE, OK...?
I WANT YOU TO TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT MORITA TETSUO...
BUT I'VE FOUND NEXT TO NOTHING
I'VE SEARCHED HIGH AND LOW...

EX-CUSE ME...?
I'LL PAY YOU
THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING
...
...
THEN I'LL JUST DOUBLE THAT...
TWO AND A HALF MILLION, EH...?
UM, WELL... HE SPLIT IT UP EQUALLY BETWEEN US...
HUH...?
THE TEN MILLION, WHERE'D IT GO...?
I'LL DOUBLE THAT AGAIN TO TEN MILLION IF I DECIDE THAT THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL
BECAUSE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS WILL LIKELY BE AT STAKE OVER NEXT WEEK'S REMATCH...
THAT WOULD BE A FORTUNE, FOR THE LIKES OF YOU





THIS GUY...
TH-

BUT...
モミ
モミ
... ...

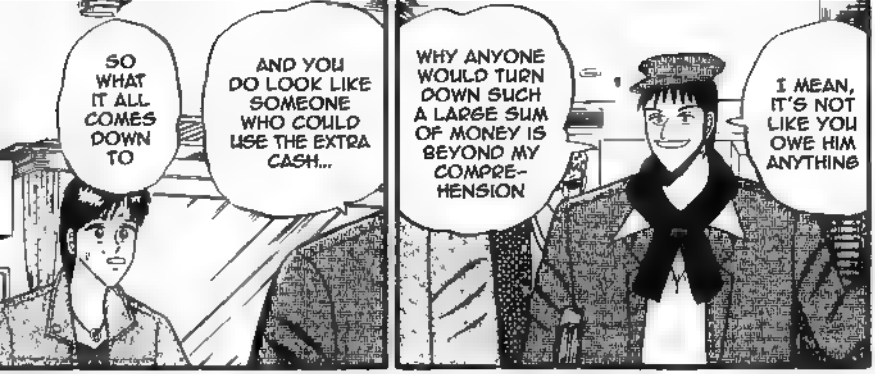
JUST LIKE HE SAID, IT'S AS IF SOME-THING'S BROKEN...
...IS TOTALLY CRAZY...

HMF...

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH YOU OFFER TO PAY US... WE CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT WE DON'T KNOW...
YEAH...

HEY!
WAIT RIGHT THERE!
I GUESS YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM AT ALL...
I'LL BE OFF, THEN
WELL, WHAT A PITY
UNLESS SOMEBODY SPEAKS UP, HE'LL NEVER LEARN
IT'S OK...
MIO...!
THAT'S BEYOND RUDE...!
YOU HAUL US ALL THE WAY OUT HERE PURELY FOR YOUR OWN CONVENIENCE, AND WHEN WE DON'T TELL YOU WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR, YOU JUST LEAVE...?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE...!
I HAVE NO REASON TO TREAT YOU OTHERWISE...
HEH HEH HEH...
HOW SO...?
RUDE, YOU SAY...?
...
...

YOU'RE NOT IN THE SAME LEAGUE AS US...
BECAUSE... WE COME FROM DIFFERENT WORLDS
AND YOU'D TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW, IF THE PRICE WERE HIGH ENOUGH...
I CAN TELL BY THE LOOKS ON YOUR FACES, THAT IF YOU KNEW ANYTHING, YOU'D SPILL YOUR GUTS RIGHT NOW
YOU TWO...
YOU'RE SLAVES TO MONEY
WE'RE THE ONES WHO RULE OVER IT


I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU OWE HIM ANYTHING
WHY ANYONE WOULD TURN DOWN SUCH A LARGE SUM OF MONEY IS BEYOND MY COMPRE-HENSION
AND YOU DO LOOK LIKE SOMEONE WHO COULD USE THE EXTRA CASH...
SO WHAT IT ALL COMES DOWN TO

...IS THAT YOU'RE LOOKING TO SELL WHAT YOU KNOW
FOR EVEN MORE MONEY...!

SOMETHING IS BROKEN...
WA-HA-HA...
WA-HA-HA...
HE HAS NO CONSCIENCE...
HE...
MORITA-KUN...
HE'S A SOCIO-PATH...
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE ACT LIKE THIS BEFORE...

ブロロロ…
WHILE THAT WOULD BE SUFFICIENT FOR US TO TAKE DOWN AN AVERAGE SMALL-TIMER
EIGHTY MIL'...
...
...
I'VE GOT THIRTY MILLION...
AROUND FIFTY MILLION, I THINK
SO, HOW MUCH CAN YOU GET...?
...I DO...!
YOU GOT A PLAN...?
...
...
IT WORRIES ME THAT WE DON'T KNOW HOW DEEP HIS WALLET GOES...
WE'LL NEED TEN, MAYBE TWENTY TIMES AS MUCH...

THE MANAGER, MATSUNUMA, IS TERRIFIED OF MY FATHER, SO HE'S ALWAYS TRYING TO WIN FAVOR WITH ME...
SAIWA CREDIT UNION... THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE WE, SAIJOU CONSTRUCTION, HOLD MOST OF OUR ASSETS...

HOWEVER... THIS TIME, I'LL BE TAKING MUCH MORE...!

LAST YEAR IN AUGUST, I DISCOVERED THAT MATSUNUMA WAS EMBEZZLING FUNDS
SO I USED THAT INFO TO BLACKMAIL HIM.
INTO GIVING ME A SUBSTANTIAL "ALLOWANCE" WHENEVER I WANT IT

IT'S JUST A GAME... BESIDES, IT'D HURT OUR REP IF WE WERE TO BACK OUT
I WANT TO END THIS IN A BIG WAY
THAT'S... WE'RE TALKING HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS... MAYBE EVEN A BILLION, TWO BILLION...?
WELL, WHY NOT...?
WOAH, HOLD UP...!
WE'LL TAKE ALL OF SAIWA'S FUND-RAISING RESOURCES, AND PUT THEM TO WORK

BECAUSE THIS NEXT POKER GAME WILL BE UN-BEATABLE...!
THE AMOUNT OF MONEY INVOLVED IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT

THAT LOW-LIFE...!
"UP TO MY ELBOW", PFEH...!
WE CAN'T ASSUME THAT HE'S AS POOR AS HE LOOKS ANYMORE
SO, AS A CAUTIONARY MEASURE, WE MUST PREPARE A ROCK-SOLID DEFENSE
THE ONLY WAY WE'D BE PUTTING OURSELVES IN A RISKY SITUATION IS IF WE OPTED NOT TO USE SAIWA
AND WHILE THE CARDS MAY BE DEALT IN HIS FAVOR, WITHOUT FUNDS, HE'LL BE FORCED TO RESIGN

FROM SAIWA'S COFFERS...

TOKYO
TOKYO

YA-SAN, YOU'RE HERE TOO...?
YEP...

WHAT TH'...
HEY YA!

LOOKS LIKE THAT RASCAL HOPPED ON THE PHONE AND CALLED EVERYONE EXCEPT FOR GIN-SAN
WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED
SURE DID

AND I RAN INTO OUR OLD PAL HARADA FROM THE HONDA GROUP BACK IN THE LOBBY
YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT I JUST SAW UMEYA OVER THERE

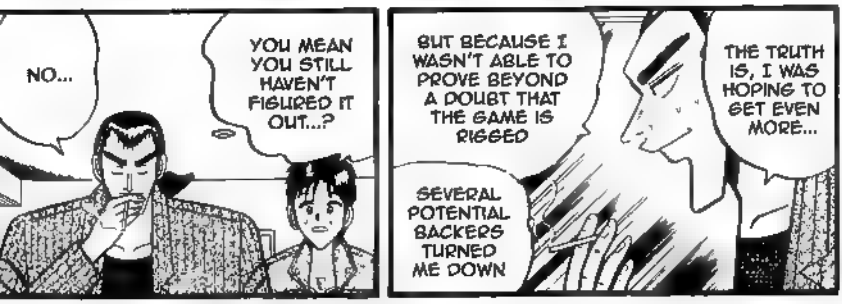
MORITA..!
LONG TIME NO SEE
HEY YOU...
PLEASE COME OVER TO THIS TABLE
OKAY, EVERY-BODY
GOOD TO SEE YOU...
YOU'RE LOOKIN' GREAT, KID
...
...
HEH, THIS OUGHTTA BE GOOD
SO...?
LET'S HEAR IT
WE'RE NOT HERE FOR A CLASS REUNION, ARE WE...?
WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT...
IS TO ASK YOU TO LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH
THE REASON I'VE CALLED ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY
YOU'RE SCHEMING SOMETHING BIG, EH...?
OF COURSE ...

...THERE'S SOMEONE I'D LIKE TO DEFEAT...!
無亡金◆明★延◆死

イカサマを見抜け!!
SEE THROUGH THE SCAM!!

THE NIGHT OF THE REMATCH
stupefied
あぜん・・
O... JUST HOW MUCH IS THIS...?
TWO HUN-DRED FIFTY MIL-LION

THIS IS MORE MONEY THAN I THOUGHT I'D EVER SEE IN MY ENTIRE LIFE...
SURELY WE'LL WIN...! SURELY...!
WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT...
スゴォイ
AWESOME
IT'S MY ONE HUNDRED NINETY MILLION, PLUS THE SIXTY MILLION THAT I BORROWED...
ひえええ!
WOW


NO...
YOU MEAN YOU STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT...?
BUT BECAUSE I WASN'T ABLE TO PROVE BEYOND A DOUBT THAT THE GAME IS RIGGED
SEVERAL POTENTIAL BACKERS TURNED ME DOWN
THE TRUTH IS, I WAS HOPING TO GET EVEN MORE...

WITH WHAT I HAVE ON HAND
FOR NOW, I'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO...
IT'S QUITE A RISKY PROPOSAL, SO IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THEY WOULD BE HESITANT...
TO ENTRUST ME WITH A LOT OF THEIR MONEY
UNFORTUNATELY, WHILE I'M ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT THERE IS A WAY TO WIN...
I COULDN'T PROVIDE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE MY CLAIM

CLUB Z
SHIBUYA, CLUB Z

OH...
SO I'D RATHER NOT HAVE IT ALL HERE WITH ME
I DON'T WANT THEM TO GET A FEEL FOR HOW MUCH WE'VE GOT

MIO... I'D LIKE YOU TO TAKE THIS BAG ASIDE AND LOOK AFTER IT FOR ME FOR A WHILE
WHY...?

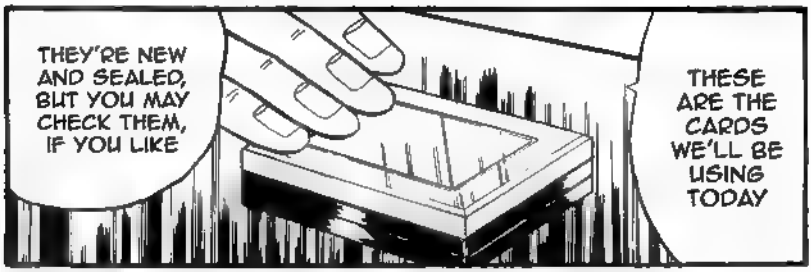
HMM... WELL, THEN...

I'LL CALL YOU OVER WHEN I NEED IT...
O-OKAY...!

AND THEN, TWO HOURS LATER
WITH ONLY ONE HUNDRED MILLION AT HAND
MORITA WAITED FOR THE TRIO
ドン…
AT 11PM, RIGHT ON TIME
IT'LL BE AN EASY WIN...
SO, YOU DECIDED TO SHOW UP AFTER ALL....
THEY ARRIVED...!
HMF...
...
..
WELL OF COURSE I DID

ざわ・・・
・・・
ゴト・・・
・・・
OH, DON'T WORRY, MORITA-KUN HAS WAY MORE...!
ヒソ
...HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK IS IN THAT CASE...?
LET'S GO OVER THE RULES, SHALL WE...?
FIRSTLY, IOUS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES
・・・
カサ・・・
I'VE PUT IT ALL DOWN IN WRITING
IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY POTENTIAL DISPUTES
HERE, READ IT...

THAT'S ALL...?
YES, THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT
FAILURE TO DO SO WITHIN THIS TIMEFRAME WILL RESULT IN FORFEITURE OF THE GAME
SECONDLY, ALL IN-GAME DECISIONS MUST BE MADE WITHIN THIRTY MINUTES

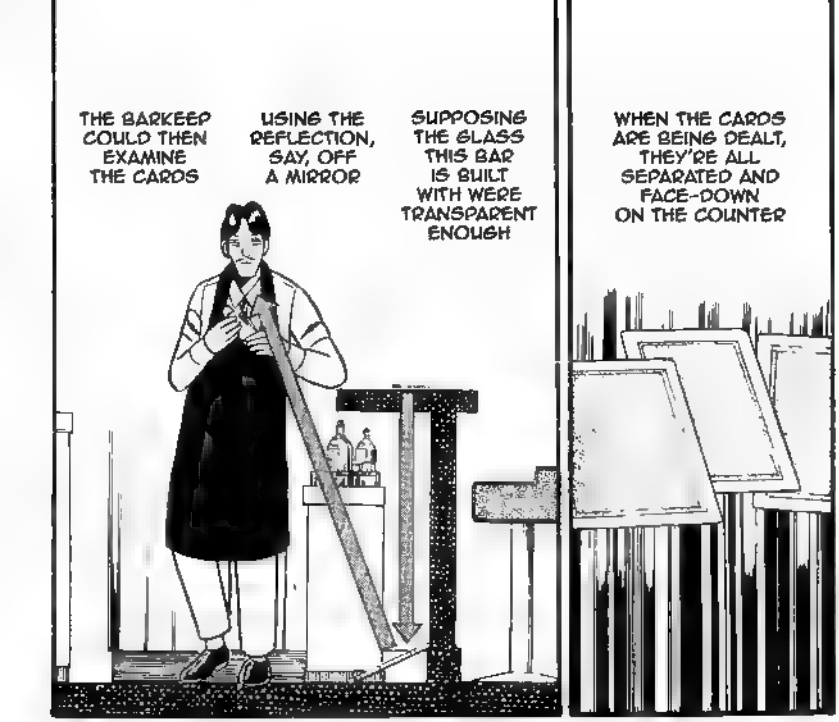

THEY'RE NEW AND SEALED, BUT YOU MAY CHECK THEM, IF YOU LIKE
THESE ARE THE CARDS WE'LL BE USING TODAY

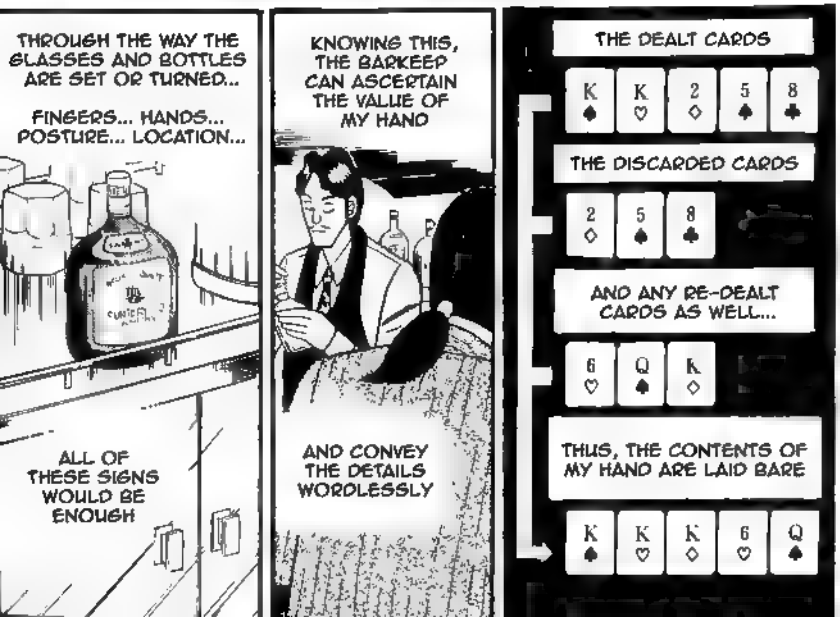
... ...
AND SO ...
IF YOU HAVE NO OBJECTIONS, THEN WE'LL BEGIN

VERSUS THE TRIO
MORITA AND THE GIRLS
THE REMATCH BEGAN
THE HEIRS TO THE TOP-TIER COMPANIES
OKABE
SAIJOU
ARITA
... ...
AW...
OH NO...
TWO PAIRS
CALL
THREE OF A KIND
COULD BE FIXING THE OUTCOME OF THEIR GAMES
MORITA HAD BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW THE TRIO
ALL WEEK LONG

EVEN AFTER AN EPIC TEN-GAME WINNING STREAK, THE ODDS THAT YOU'LL LOSE THE NEXT GAME...
ARE VERY HIGH
BECAUSE POKER IS THE SORT OF GAME WHERE...
IN ORDER TO KEEP WINNING...
...
...
HE COULD BE SECRETLY SWAPPING IN A CARD OR TWO FROM THE DECK...
BUT IN SKY HIGH POKER, THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS...
IS NOT TO LOSE AT THE END
ALSO, IN POKER, THE OUTCOME OF THE PREVIOUS GAME HAS NO IMPACT ON HOW THE NEXT ONE WILL PLAY OUT...
IN THE LONG RUN, "SWAPPING" CARDS CAN'T BE WHAT'S ALLOWING THEM TO CONTINUE TO WIN IN SUCH A CONSISTENT MANNER
BUT THERE MIGHT BE...
HE COULD BE KEEPING A FEW ACES UP HIS SLEEVE, SO TO SPEAK, TO SNEAK IN AT FAVORABLE POINTS IN THE GAME...
BUT WITH THIS TRICK, YOU RUN THE RISK THAT YOUR OPPONENT MAY ALSO HAVE THE SAME CARD IN THEIR HAND
OR...
BUT PICKING THE CORRECT ONES FROM THE REMAINING STACK WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED...
MARKING THE BACKS OF THE CARDS, FOR EXAMPLE
THIS WOULD ALLOW HIM TO READ HIS OPPONENTS' HANDS
IN OTHER WORDS, HE COULD KNOW WHICH CARDS HIS OPPONENTS ARE HOLDING...
BICYCLE
CLAIRVOYANCE...!
...A MORE RELIABLE WAY TO WIN
THE GIRLS HAVE BEEN WATCHING THE CARDS WITH ME, SO WE SHOULD HAVE SEEN SOME EVIDENCE OF TAMPERING BY NOW
BUT, I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CASE THIS TIME...
THERE'S A TRICK TO THIS COUNTER...!
THE WAY THE CARDS ARE BEING DEALT...
THE COUNTER...
I SUSPECT IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH...


THE BARKEEP COULD THEN EXAMINE THE CARDS
USING THE REFLECTION, SAY, OFF A MIRROR
SUPPOSING THE GLASS THIS BAR IS BUILT WITH WERE TRANSPARENT ENOUGH
WHEN THE CARDS ARE BEING DEALT, THEY'RE ALL SEPARATED AND FACE-DOWN ON THE COUNTER


THROUGH THE WAY THE GLASSES AND BOTTLES ARE SET OR TURNED...
FINGERS... HANDS... POSTURE... LOCATION...
ALL OF THESE SIGNS WOULD BE ENOUGH
KNOWING THIS, THE BARKEEP CAN ASCERTAIN THE VALUE OF MY HAND
AND CONVEY THE DETAILS WORDLESSLY
THE DEALT CARDS
K ♠ K ♡ 2 ◇ 5 ♠ 8 ♣
THE DISCARDED CARDS
2 ◇ 5 ♠ 8 ♣
AND ANY RE-DEALT CARDS AS WELL...
6 ♡ Q ♠ K ◇
THUS, THE CONTENTS OF MY HAND ARE LAID BARE
K ♠ K ♡ K ◇ 6 ♡ Q ♠

HE'S IN ON IT...!
THAT IS TO SAY, THIS STRAIGHT-FACED FELLA OVER HERE...
SAIJOU SHOULD GLANCE TOWARD THE BARKEEP TO LOOK FOR A SIGNAL...
IF WHAT I'M THINKING IS CORRECT
HOW-EVER
SOMETIME AFTER ALL OF MY CARDS HAVE BEEN SEEN

SAIJOU'S EYES NEVER STRAYED...!
HE JUST CONTINUED TO WATCH MORITA INTENTLY
IN THE THIRTY MINUTES SINCE THE GAME HAD BEGUN
SAIJOU HAD NOT MADE ANY SUSPICIOUS MOVEMENTS
HE WAS FOCUSED SOLELY ON THE CARDS AND ON MORITA...

WAS I WRONG ...?
ざわ..ざわ..
...
...
IF THE BARKEEP TRULY ISN'T INVOLVED, THEN...
WHAT IS IT...?
ARE THE CARDS BEING MARKED ...?
OR IS IT SOMETHING ELSE...?
MORITA WAS AT A LOSS
...I JUST DON'T KNOW ...
THREE OF A KIND...!
AND AFTER THE DRAW, IT BECAME
A FULL HOUSE

THE MONEY QUICKLY BEGAN TO PILE UP
AFTER THE INITIAL BUY-IN OF ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND
ゴク…
…
…
ざわ…
…
…
I'LL RAISE YOU TWO MILLION …!
I'LL BET FIVE MILLION …!
IT'S A FULL HOUSE, AND IT'S THE BEST COMBO I'VE SEEN ALL HOUR
…
…
HE'S GOT TO HAVE THE STRONGEST HAND
IT'S ALSO ABOUT TIMING
POKER ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE CARDS
EVEN IN A BIG GAME LIKE THIS, IF YOU'VE GOT A GOOD HAND, THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT YOUR OPPONENT WILL HAVE ONE AS WELL
LUCK IS ON OUR SIDE
…
…

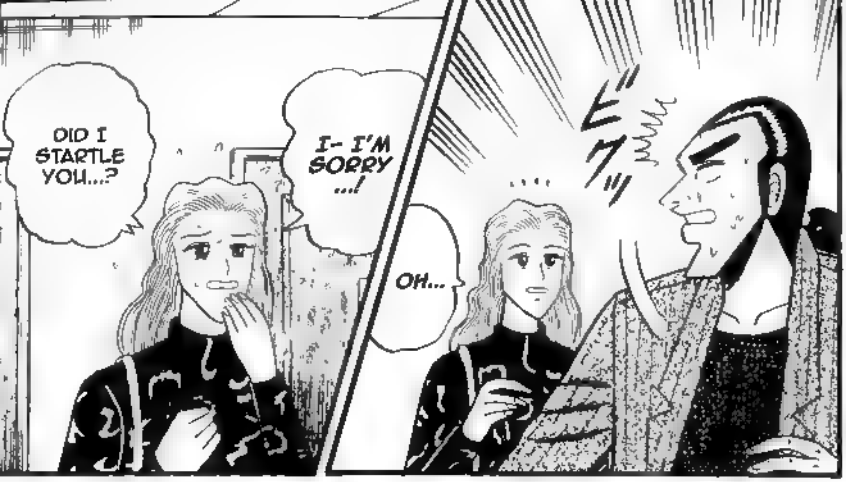
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SAIJOU COULD HAVE ANYTHING BETTER THAN THIS...
WOULD YOU EXCUSE ME ..
MORITA-KUN...
WH... WHAT FOR...? MORITA-KUN...!
HUH ...?
...I FOLD
...
...
I HAD A BAD FEELING, IS ALL...

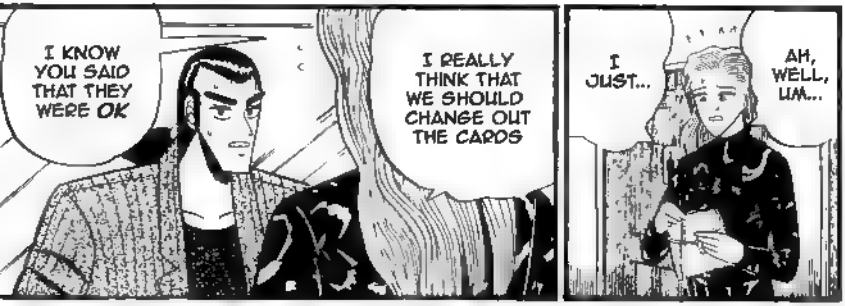
THAT BASTARD'S INTUITION IS PRETTY GOOD...!
NO, I DON'T THINK SO
IT'S JUST A COINCI-DENCE
DO YOU THINK HE'S CAUGHT ON...?
TCH...
ONE THAT TRUMPED MORITA'S
A FULL HOUSE
MORITA MADE A NARROW ESCAPE
BUT IT WAS NO COINCIDENCE...
IT WAS A STROKE OF LUCK THAT MORITA HAD WILLED INTO BEING...

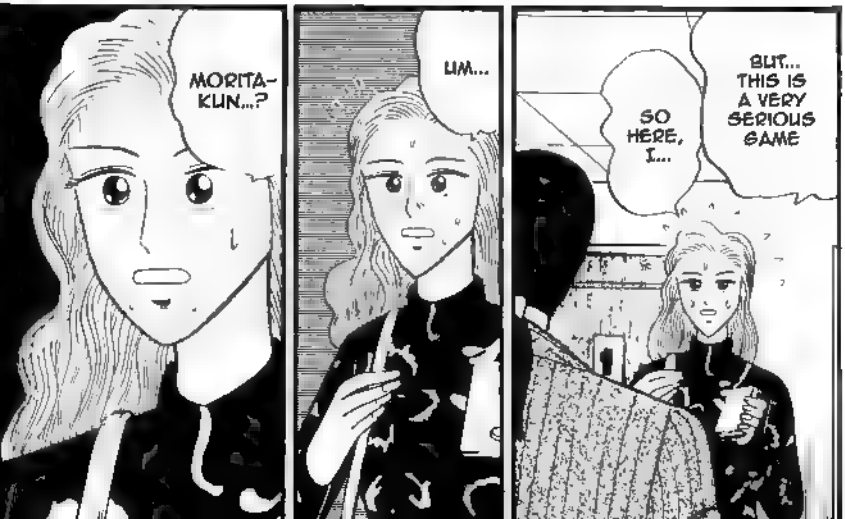
I'M IN THE SAME SITUATION AS ALL OF THE GIRLS SAIJOU'S SCAMMED...!
I STILL CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT...
SO, NOW THAT THEY'VE LURED ME IN, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO...?
SHIT...!

I FEEL LIKE I'VE BECOME A THIRD-RATE GAMBLER...
HAVE I LOST MY TOUCH...?

トニ..


DID I STARTLE YOU...?
I- I'M SORRY ...!
OH...
ビク!!


I KNOW YOU SAID THAT THEY WERE OK
I REALLY THINK THAT WE SHOULD CHANGE OUT THE CARDS
I JUST...
AH, WELL, UM...


MORITA-KUN...?
UM...
SO HERE, I...
BUT... THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS GAME

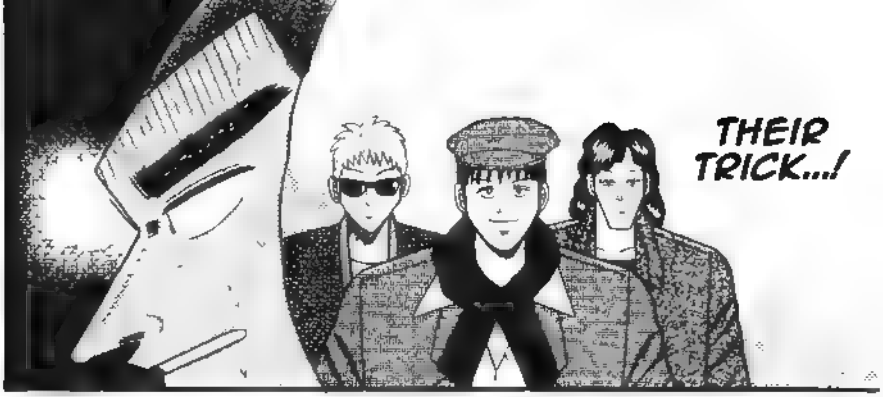
THAT'S IT...!
...
...
SHH...!
WHAT'S WRONG...? MORITA-KUN...!
THE SCAM'S DIVISION OF ROLES...
WHY DIDN'T I NOTICE IT BEFORE...
BECAUSE...
THERE BEHIND HIM...
IT WAS NEVER NECESSARY FOR SAIJOU TO LOOK OVER TOWARD THE BARKEEP IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE SIGNALS
JUST LIKE THIS, INFORMATION AND SIGNALS CAN BE CONVEYED THROUGH A SIMPLE TOUCH. .

THE GUY BEHIND HIM IS ACTING AS SAIJOU'S EYES...!
...IS ONE OF HIS PALS
銀と金◆第36話◆完

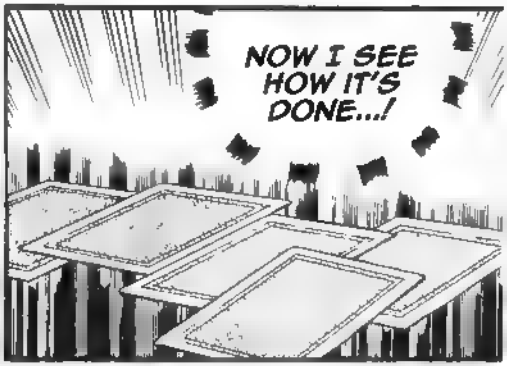
第1話

イカサマの構図

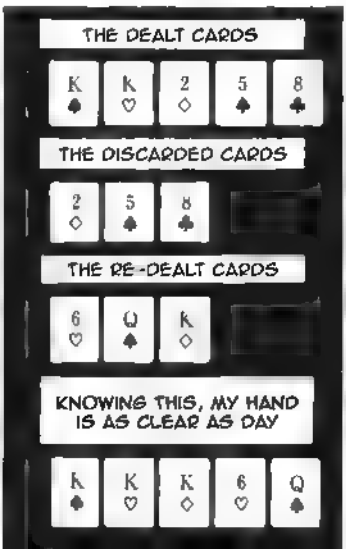
ANATOMY OF A SCAM

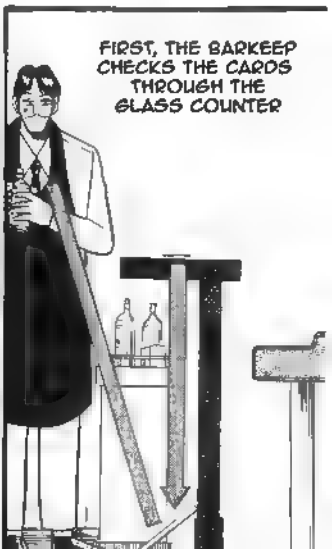

THEIR TRICK...!

IT'S A CO-OP PLAY BEING CARRIED OUT BY THREE PEOPLE

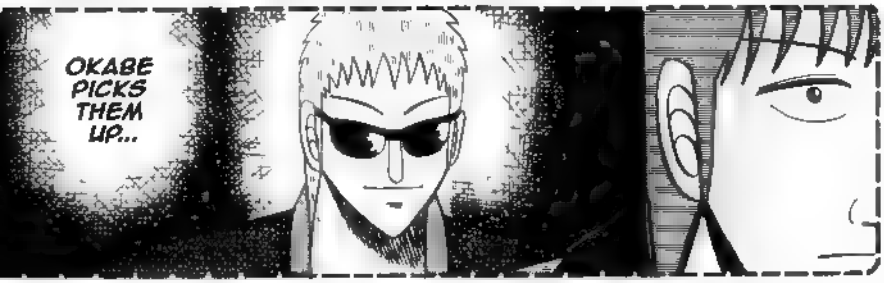

NOW I SEE HOW IT'S DONE...!

THE BARKEEP THEN TURNS THIS INFO INTO A SIGNAL ONLY THEY UNDERSTAND


THE DEALT CARDS
K ♠ K ♡ 2 ◇ 5 ♠ 8 ♣
THE DISCARDED CARDS
2 ◇ 5 ♠ 8 ♣
THE RE-DEALT CARDS
6 ♡ Q ♠ K ◇
KNOWING THIS, MY HAND IS AS CLEAR AS DAY
K ♠ K ♡ K ◇ 6 ♡ Q ♠


FIRST, THE BARKEEP CHECKS THE CARDS THROUGH THE GLASS COUNTER

INSTEAD...
HOWEVER, SAIJOU PAYS NO ATTENTION TO THE SIGNS WHILE HE'S PLAYING
THE VALUE IS CONVEYED THROUGH THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE GLASSES AND BOTTLES
SUNTORY OLD WHISKY


OKABE PICKS THEM UP...

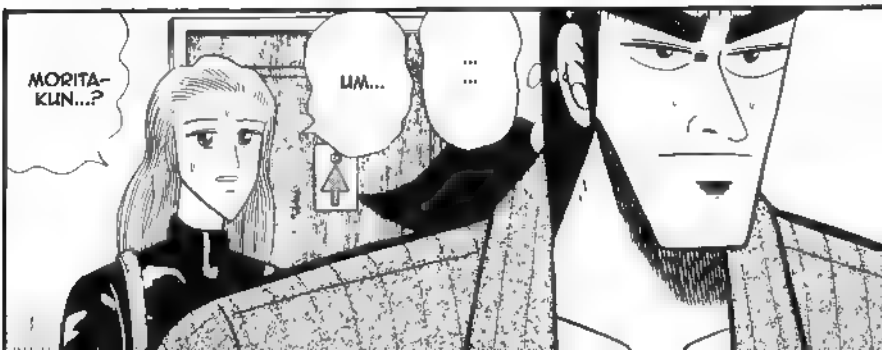
I'M SURE OF IT...!
THAT'S IT...!
AND TAPS THESE SIGNALS OUT ON SAIJOU'S BACK...!

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT...!
THAT'S THEIR TRICK

IF I CAN'T THINK OF A WAY TO TURN THIS AGAINST THEM
KNOWING THE TRICK IS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE
THEN THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN WIN...!

THE QUESTION IS, WHAT DO I DO NOW...

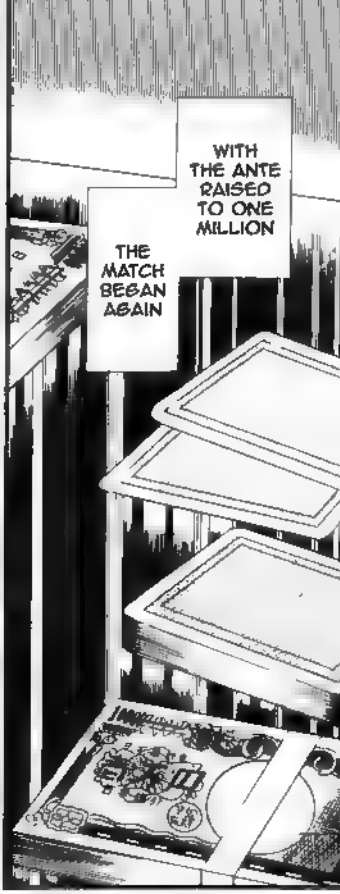
SO...
...
...

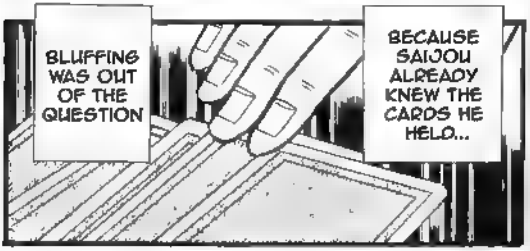

MORITA-KUN...?
UM...
...
...

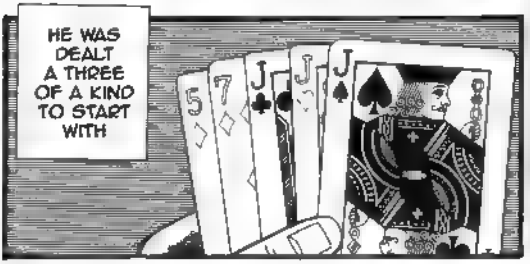
HM...?
KNOCK
KNOCK
THOSE GUYS HAVE A RATHER SUSPICIOUS REQUEST...
SAY, MORITA-KUN...
YUKARI ...?
WHAT DO THEY WANT...?

ざわ
ざ
THE ANTE WE AGREED UPON IS FAR TOO LOW...
THE MATCH IS JUST PUTTERING ALONG
IT'S A REAL DRAG
WITH A MERE ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND AT STAKE, IF WE'RE NOT CONFIDENT IN OUR CARDS, WE DON'T EVEN HAVE TO THINK TWICE ABOUT FOLDING
SO WHY DON'T WE RAISE THE ANTE TO ONE MILLION ...?
WORD MIGHT GET OUT ABOUT THIS...
...BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, I'D RATHER NOT HAVE SO MUCH CASH SITTING OUT IN THE OPEN FOR SUCH A LONG TIME
...
HONESTLY, MORITA WANTED THE ANTE TO REMAIN AS IT WAS
ざわ...
BECAUSE HE HAD YET TO FORMULATE A PLAN TO DEAL WITH HIS OPPONENT'S TRICKERY
HOW-EVER
MORITA GAVE HIS CONSENT
FINE WITH ME...
THE CONCERNS SAIJOU HAD ABOUT THE MATCH WERE REASONABLE, AND HE DIDN'T WANT TO AROUSE SUSPICION

MORITA KEPT ON LOSING
...I FOLD


WITH THE ANTE RAISED TO ONE MILLION
THE MATCH BEGAN AGAIN


BLUFFING WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION
BECAUSE SAIJOU ALREADY KNEW THE CARDS HE HELD...


HE WAS DEALT A THREE OF A KIND TO START WITH

THERE'S REALLY NO WAY TO WIN
AFTER ALL, IN A RIGGED GAME WHERE YOUR CARDS ARE KNOWN BY YOUR OPPONENT...

IF SAIJOU CAME ON STRONG, HE'D HAVE TO FOLD AGAIN...
... ...

MEIHO-CHAN, HAND ME ANOTHER TEN MILLION
OF COURSE
...
...
MORITA-KUN...
WE'RE FINE...
EITHER BY MOVING THE GAME'S LOCATION OVER TO A TABLE
OR
IT WOULD BE EASY TO BLOCK THE SCAM ITSELF
BUT WHY ...?
BUT MORITA DECIDED AGAINST DOING EITHER OF THOSE THINGS...
AND SO, WITH LITTLE CHANCE FOR SUCCESS, HE CONTINUED TO PLAY
BY ASKING FOR THE BARKEEP TO LEAVE

BECAUSE EVERYTHING WOULD BE RUINED IF HE DID...!
IT'S SIMPLE...

THEN THEY CERTAINLY WOULDN'T ALLOW THIS HIGH-STAKES GAME TO CONTINUE
IF THEY WEREN'T ABLE TO USE THEIR CARD-SPYING TECHNIQUE TO CHEAT

TWO PAIRS
AND WHILE IT *WOULD* BE SATISFYING TO HUMILIATE THEM BY REVEALING THEIR SCAM...
THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY DOING SO AT THIS POINT IN THE GAME
TO THINK OTHERWISE WOULD BE ABSURD

ALL OF THIS MONEY IS BAIT...
BAIT TO KEEP THIS SUCKER FROM RUNNING AWAY...
MORITA LOST AGAIN
WELL, WHAT A PITY...
HEH HEH HEH
I NEED TO RACK UP A FEW MORE LOSSES ANYWAY
GOOD, YOU KEEP WINNING
CHUMP ...!
I'D WIPE THAT SMUG LOOK OFF YOUR FACE IF I WERE YOU...
I'LL WAIT FOR THE PERFECT HAND...!
I'LL WAIT...
SO FOR NOW...
I ONLY NEED TO WIN ONCE...

AH...
THEIR TRICK...
SO YOU HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT YET...?

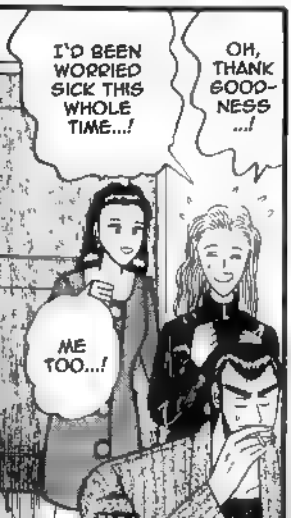
...
...

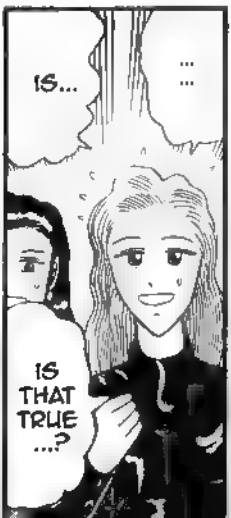
YOU HAVE ...?
AND I'VE THOUGHT OF A WAY TO CATCH THEM AT IT, TOO
I'VE KNOWN FOR A WHILE NOW

ざわ・・・

BUT... THE CARDS HAVEN'T TURNED UP YET...

YES...
...FOR REAL...?

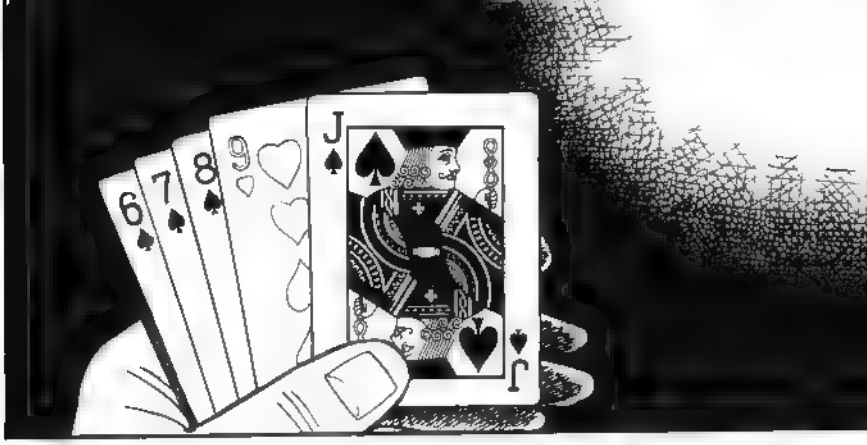

I'D BEEN WORRIED SICK THIS WHOLE TIME...!
OH, THANK GOOD-NESS ...!
ME TOO...!

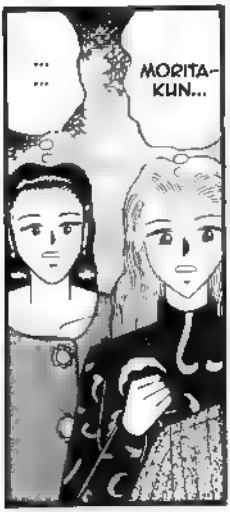

IS...
... ...
IS THAT TRUE ...?

SO I'M JUST WAITING ON THE CARDS
THE PLAN I'VE DEVISED WON'T WORK UNLESS I'M DEALT A GOOD STARTING HAND

WE STILL HAVE MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED MILLION
WE'VE LOST FORTY FIVE MILLION, BUT...
JUST KEEP WAITING UNTIL YOU GET THE CARDS YOU NEED...!
IT'S SUCH A RELIEF THAT YOU'VE FOUND A WAY TO FINISH THEM OFF
SAY WHAT...?
... ...
SO DON'T LOSE HOPE, OKAY...?
LOOK, WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME AND MONEY
YOU JUST DON'T GET IT...
YES...
WE ARE...?
WE'RE ALREADY CUTTING IT CLOSE...
UM...
... ...

LADIES, I'D LIKE YOU TO RECALL
THE CASE THAT THEY BROUGHT WITH THEM TONIGHT
IF A CASE LIKE THAT IS PACKED TIGHTLY
IT CAN EASILY HOLD ONE HUNDRED FIFTY MILLION
IF YOU ADD TO THAT THE FORTY-FIVE MILLION THEY WON FROM US...
THEN THEY'VE GOT ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE MILLION
ALTHOUGH WE STARTED WITH TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION
WE ONLY HAVE TWO HUNDRED AND FIVE MILLION LEFT
SO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US IS ONLY TEN MILLION
IF WE LOSE ANOTHER SIX MILLION, THEN...
EVEN IF I'M DEALT THE CARDS I'M HOPING FOR...
WE'D LOSE, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RAISE
OH MY GOD...
HE'S RIGHT ...!
AH...!
HEH HEH...
... ...


6♠
7♠
8♠
9♥
J♠

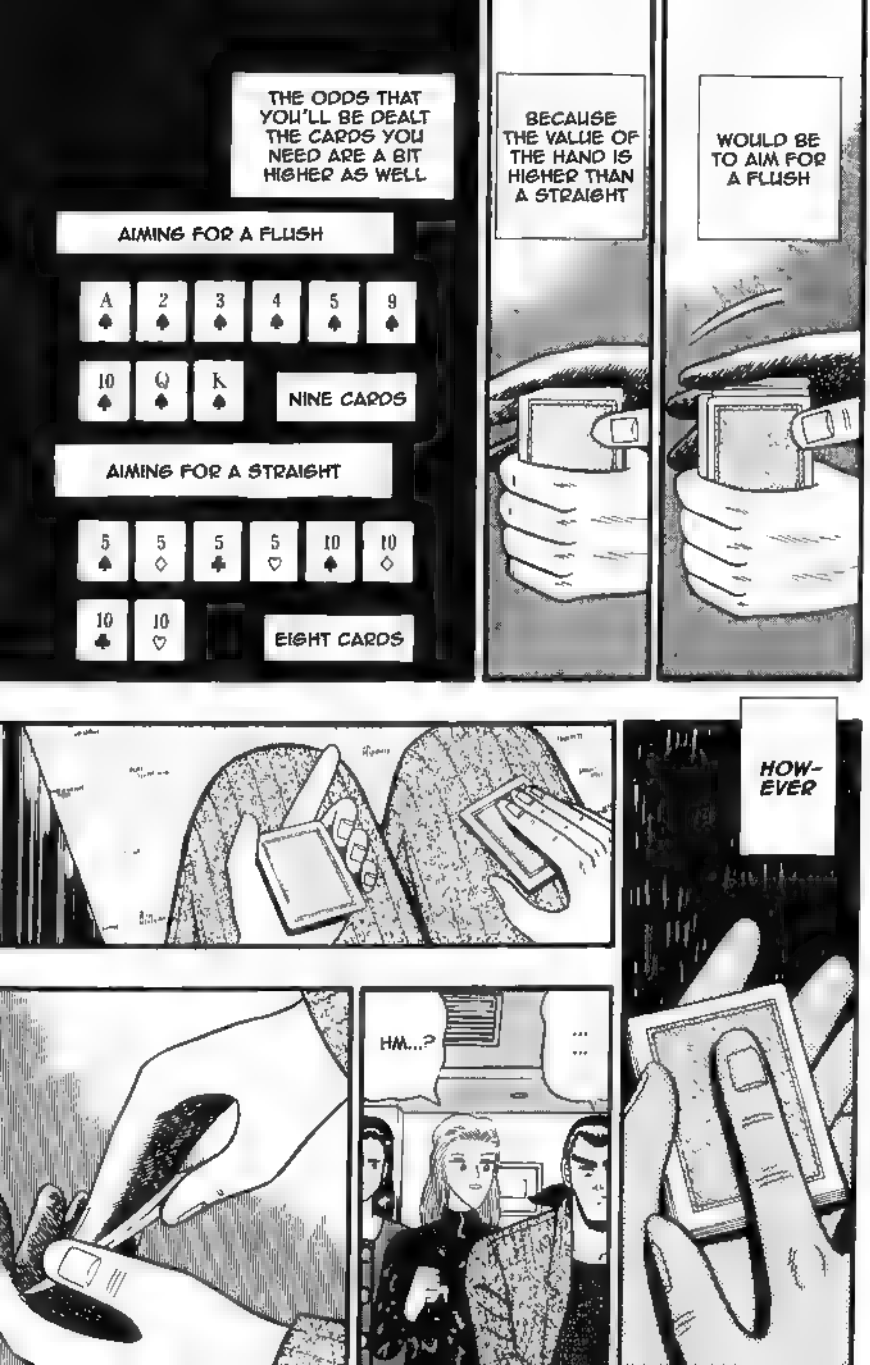

...
...
MORITA-KUN...

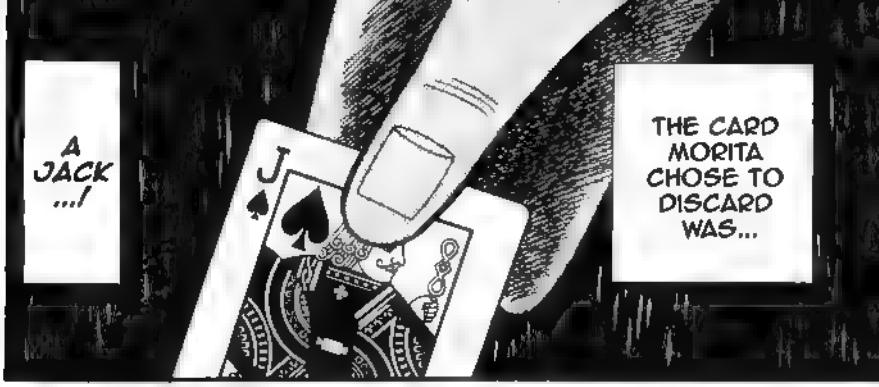
HE COULD TRY FOR EITHER ONE
A STRAIGHT OR A FLUSH

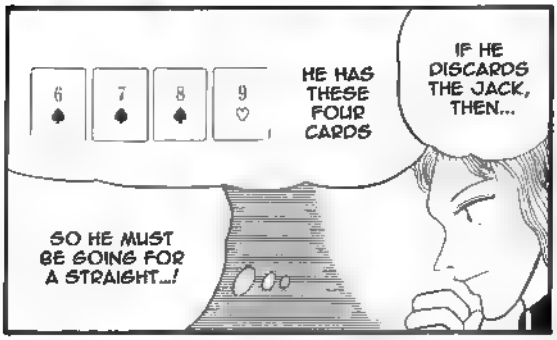
THE COMBINATION OF CARDS HE'D BEEN WAITING FOR FINALLY APPEARED...
AFTER THE MATCH BEGAN AGAIN FOR THE THIRD TIME

THE IDEAL STRATEGY FOR THIS KIND OF SITUATION ...
HE HAD TWO OPTIONS

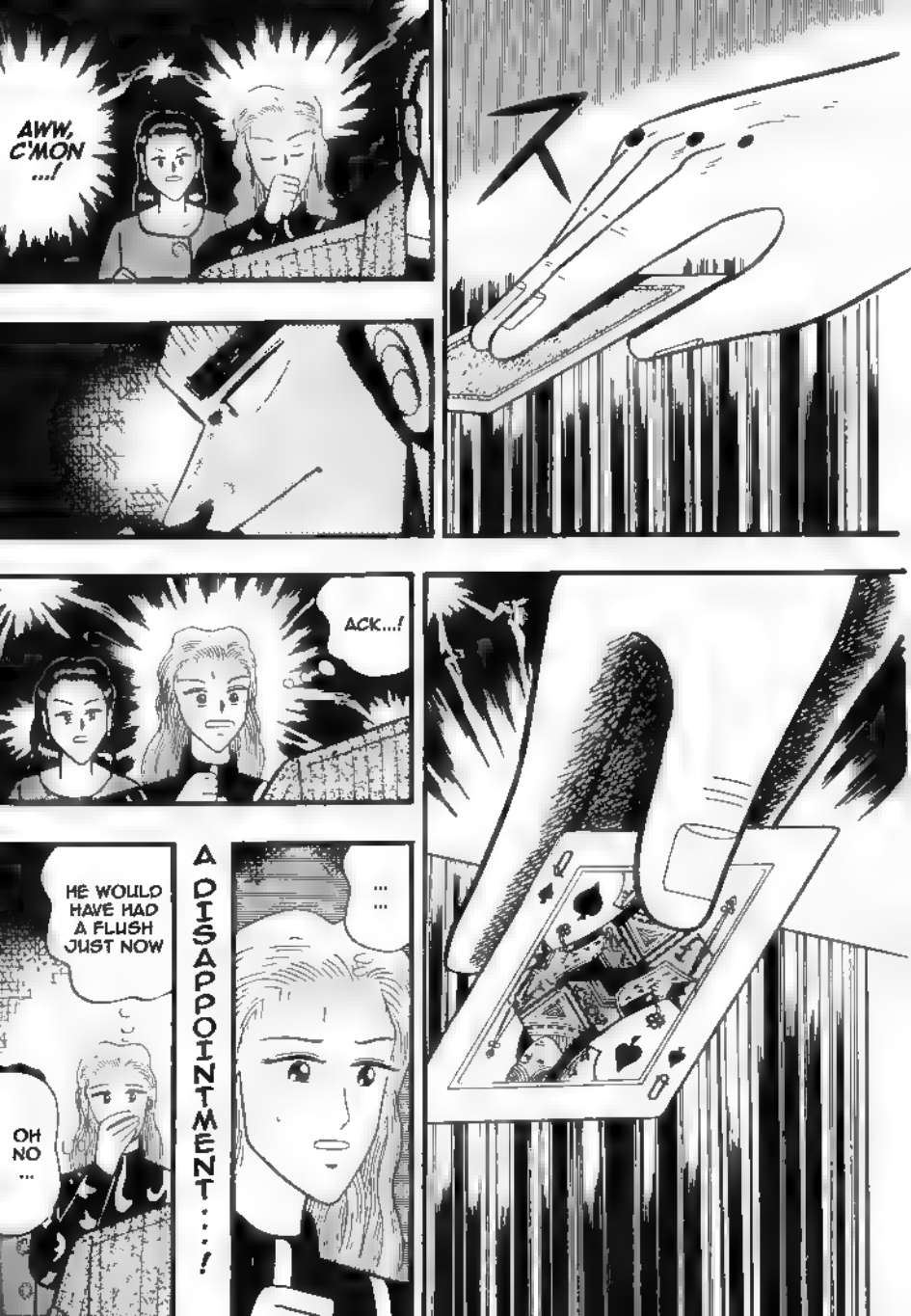
...
...


THE ODDS THAT YOU'LL BE DEALT THE CARDS YOU NEED ARE A BIT HIGHER AS WELL
AIMING FOR A FLUSH
A ♠ 2 ♠ 3 ♠ 4 ♠ 5 ♠ 9 ♠
10 ♠ Q ♠ K ♠
NINE CARDS
AIMING FOR A STRAIGHT
5 ♠ 5 ♢ 5 ♣ 5 ♡ 10 ♠ 10 ♢
10 ♣ 10 ♡
EIGHT CARDS
BECAUSE THE VALUE OF THE HAND IS HIGHER THAN A STRAIGHT
WOULD BE TO AIM FOR A FLUSH
HOW-EVER
HM...?
...
...





HE THREW THE FLUSH AWAY...!


AWW, C'MON ...!
ACK...!
A DISAPPOINTMENT...!
... ...
HE WOULD HAVE HAD A FLUSH JUST NOW
OH NO ...

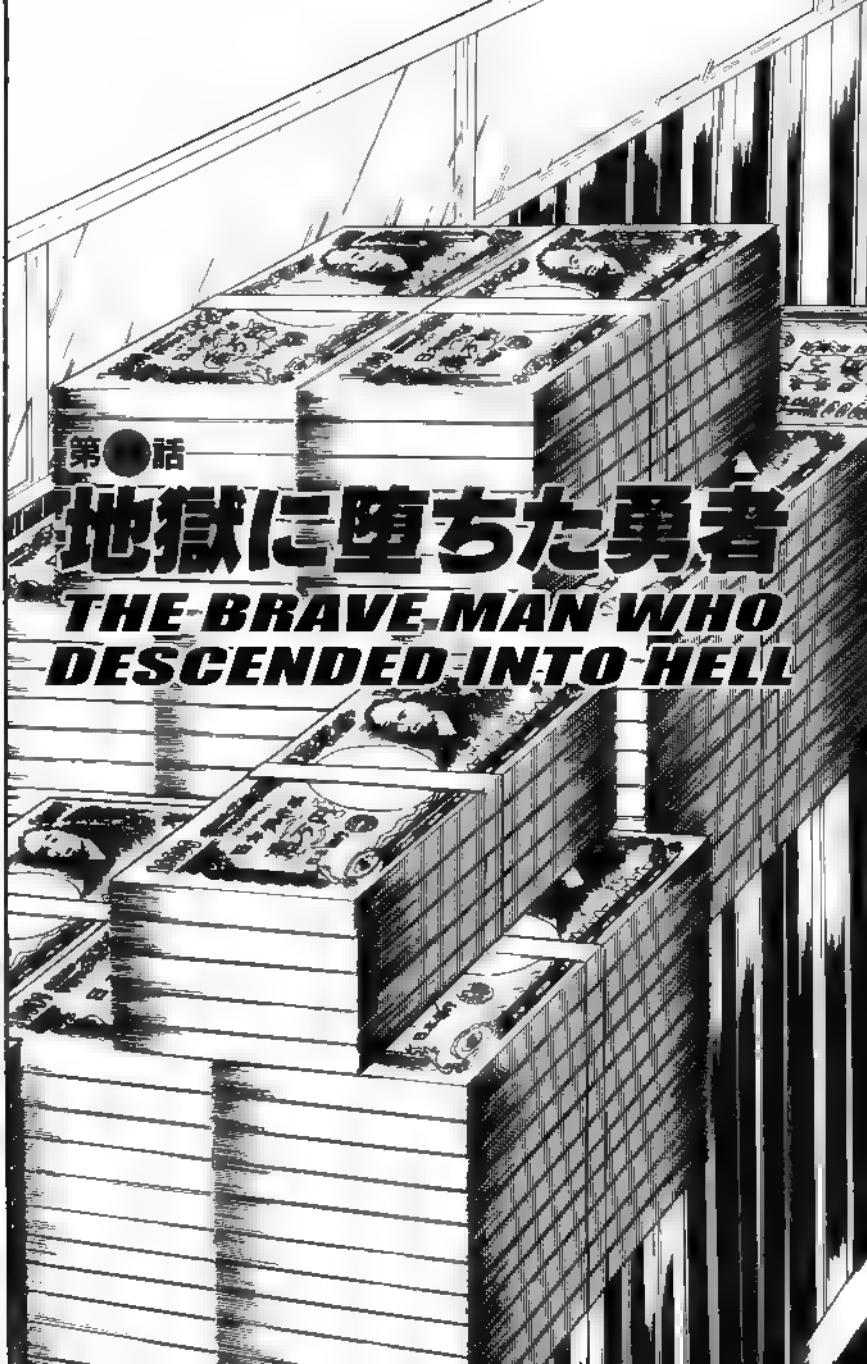
...
...
CAN HE REALLY PUT TOGETHER A WINNING HAND IN TIME...?
NOW HE ONLY HAS TWO OR THREE DRAWS LEFT...
THAT WAS A CRITICAL MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR US
MEIHO-CHAN...
BRING MIO OVER, WOULD YOU...?
HUH...?
WHAT IS HE THINKING...?
HE'S TELLING ME TO GO GET THE MONEY ...?
BUT, HIS HAND IS TOTALLY WORTH-LESS...!
NO WAY ...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE CARDS
GO GET HER...
IT'S FINE...
MORITA-KUN...
. . .
...

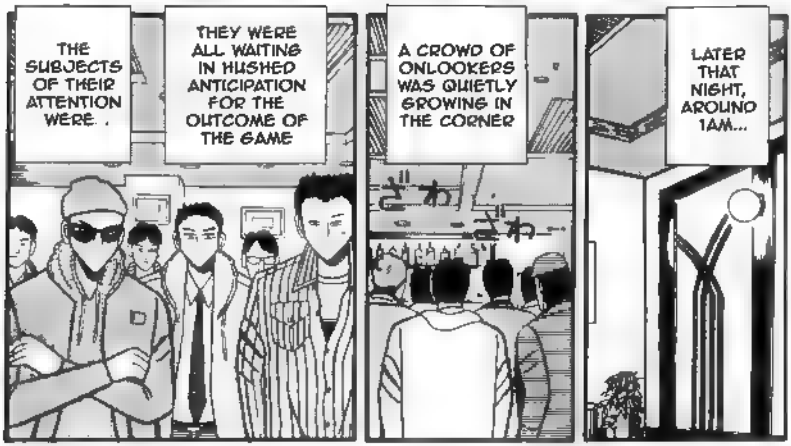
MORITA-KUN...
SO WE MUST...
BUT WE'RE RUNNING SHORT ON TIME
I WISH WE COULD HAVE HELD OFF ON DOING THIS...

IF CARDS ARE OF NO USE IN THIS GAME
THEN I'LL USE MONEY ...!

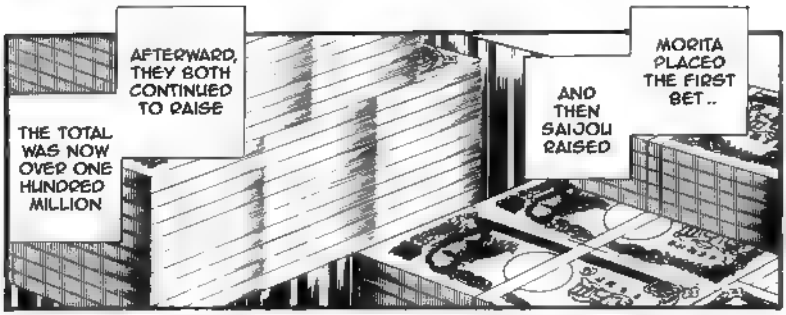
I'LL CRUSH THEM WITH IT...!


第●話
地獄に堕ちた勇者
THE BRAVE MAN WHO
DESCENDED INTO HELL

CLUB Z
SHIBUYA, CLUB Z

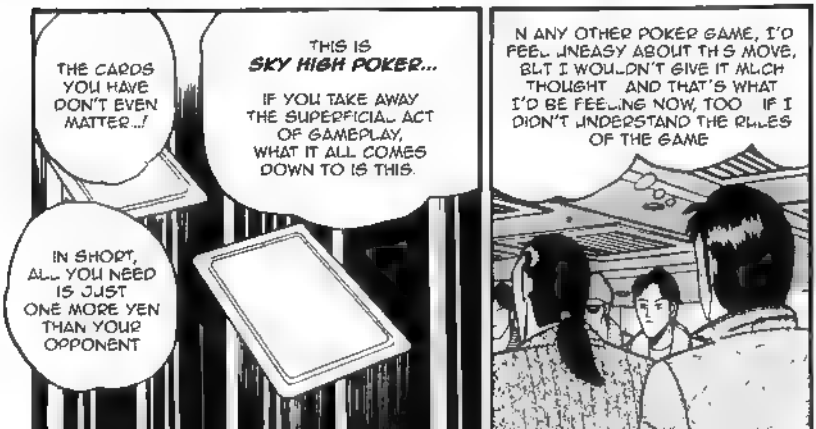

THE SUBJECTS OF THEIR ATTENTION WERE...
THEY WERE ALL WAITING IN HUSHED ANTICIPATION FOR THE OUTCOME OF THE GAME
A CROWD OF ONLOOKERS WAS QUIETLY GROWING IN THE CORNER
LATER THAT NIGHT, AROUND 1AM...

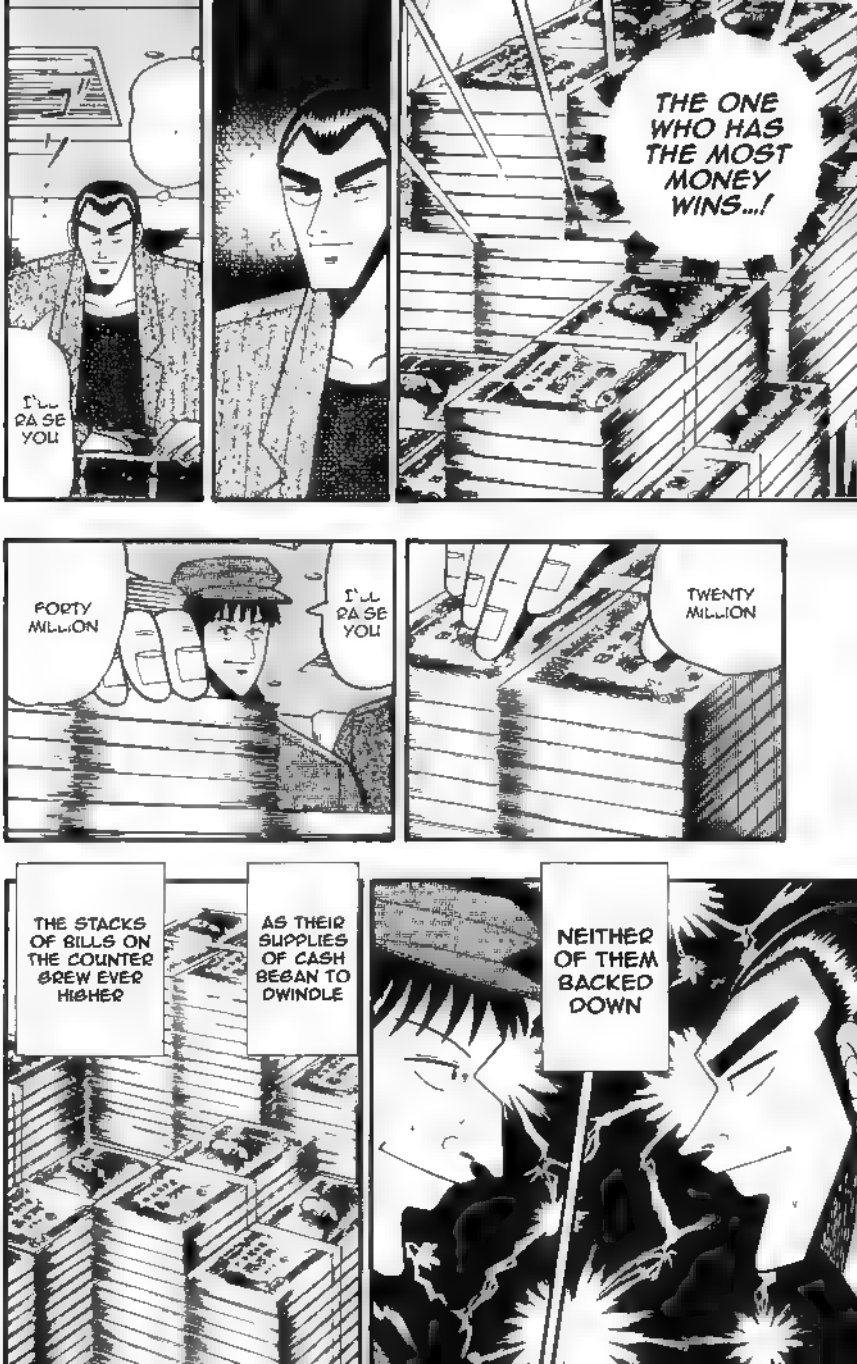
TETSUO MORITA ...!
AND
THE SECOND SON OF THE CEO OF SAIJOU CONSTRUCTION
SHINYA SAIJOU


AFTERWARD, THEY BOTH CONTINUED TO RAISE
THE TOTAL WAS NOW OVER ONE HUNDRED MILLION
AND THEN SAIJOU RAISED
MORITA PLACED THE FIRST BET..

BUT, EVEN THOUGH THIS WILL BE THE DECIDING GAME
MEIHO TOLD ME THAT MORITA-KUN'S HAND IS
IT'S TOO LATE TO FOLD NOW
MORITA-KUN'S GOING TO BET EVERYTHING ON THIS LAST GAME
HE HAS TO GO ALL IN
THIS IS THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

6 ♠
7 ♠
8 ♠
9 ♡
Q ♠
COMPLETELY WORTHLESS...!


THE CARDS YOU HAVE DON'T EVEN MATTER..!
IN SHORT, ALL YOU NEED IS JUST ONE MORE YEN THAN YOUR OPPONENT
THIS IS SKY HIGH POKER...
IF YOU TAKE AWAY THE SUPERFICIAL ACT OF GAMEPLAY, WHAT IT ALL COMES DOWN TO IS THIS.
IN ANY OTHER POKER GAME, I'D FEEL UNEASY ABOUT THIS MOVE, BUT I WOULDN'T GIVE IT MUCH THOUGHT AND THAT'S WHAT I'D BE FEELING NOW, TOO IF I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE RULES OF THE GAME


I'LL RAISE YOU
THE ONE WHO HAS THE MOST MONEY WINS...!
FORTY MILLION
I'LL RAISE YOU
TWENTY MILLION
THE STACKS OF BILLS ON THE COUNTER GREW EVER HIGHER
AS THEIR SUPPLIES OF CASH BEGAN TO DWINDLE
NEITHER OF THEM BACKED DOWN

BUT, THEIR ELATION DIDN'T LAST LONG
FOR A SECOND, THEIR HEARTS JUMPED FOR JOY
WHEN THE TRIO'S SUPPLY OF CASH FINALLY RAN OUT
HEH HEH HEH
BY RAISING ANOTHER FIFTY MILLION
AND MADE UP FOR THEIR LACK OF CASH
SAIJOU WHIPPED OUT HIS CELL PHONE, AND FIVE MINUTES AFTER MAKING A CALL, A GENTLEMAN IN A SUIT ARRIVED
SO THAT HE CAN GIVE ME AN ADVANCE PAYMENT
IT'S TERRIBLY IMPOSING OF ME, BUT I CALLED HIM OUT HERE
YES.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT
WE, SAIJOU CONSTRUCTION, HAVE HAD A LONGSTANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH SAIWA CREDIT UNION
LET ME INTRODUCE YOU.
THIS IS MATSUNUMA, MANAGER OF THE TAMA BRANCH

AS HE NEEDS
AS MUCH
HE HAS ONLY TO PLACE A CALL, AND I WILL BRING OVER
AT HIS REQUEST, AMPLE FUNDS HAVE BEEN READIED
HEH HEH
WHAT WILL YOU DO... MORITA-KUN...
SO...
THOSE BASTARDS .!
THIS POKER GAME IS TOTALLY.
OUT OF CON-TROL
ざわざわ・

HE'S GOT A LOT OF NERVE, BRINGING A CREDIT UNION INTO THIS MESS
AND WITH THE LITTLE REMAINING MONEY WE HAVE NOW, TOO.
DAMN
EVEN IF MORITA-KUN DID HAVE ANOTHER RESOURCE TO CALL UPON AT THIS POINT
O-HO HO..
THE POSSIBILITY OF BRINGING IN OUTSIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WAS NEVER BROUGHT UP
UNTIL NOW

I'D BEEN WONDERING WHAT YOU'D DO
SO...
"WHERE WOULD A GUY LIKE SAJOU GO TO FOR BACKUP"

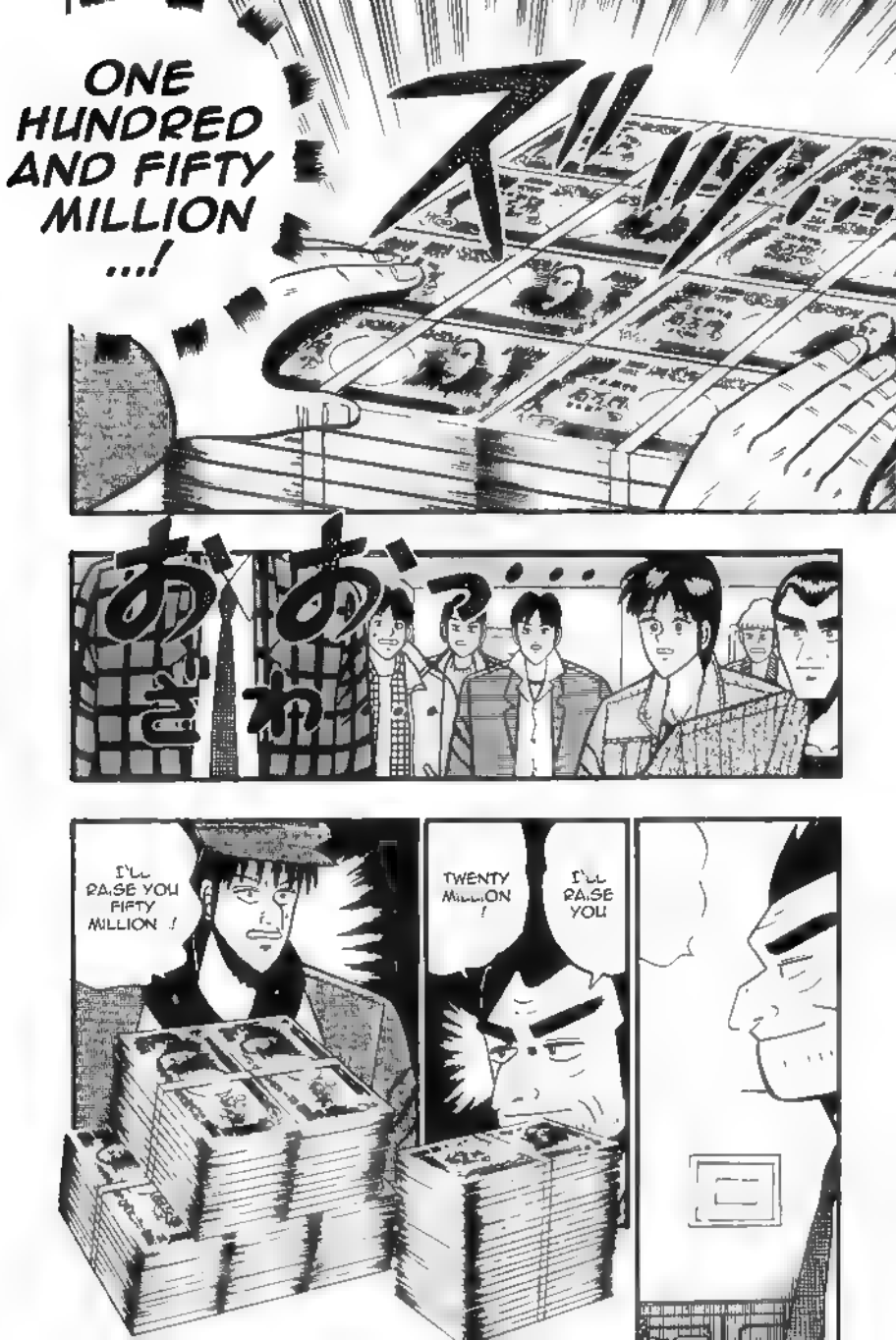
IS NOTHING TO ME...!
A MERE CREDIT UNION
THIS IS YOUR SUPPORT?
WELL, WHAT A RELIEF
HUH?
I'LL TAKE YOU DOWN!
STACK UP AS MUCH MONEY AS YOU WANT
THERE LIES AN UNDERWORLD
OUTSIDE THE REALM OF COMMON KNOWLEDGE, WITHIN THIS SOCIETY.
AH, BUT WHO AM I TO PRESUME WHAT YOU KNOW

ササッ..
TWO OF MY MENTORS
I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO.
ざわざわ

RICHIE RICH
THAT JUST MEANS I'LL BE MAKING THE RAISES FROM NOW ON.
YOUR WHAT ?
THEY'LL BE MY BACKERS TODAY
YASUDA-SAN AND FUNADA-SAN, MY FORMER FELLOW CONSPIRATORS
SIR...
HEY...
ざわ...
ドビ"
ドビ"
ドビ"...

AND I'LL RAISE YOU TWENTY MILLION
HERE'S FIFTY MILLION
FEH...!
SAIJOU
I'LL RAISE YOU
THERE'S TWO HUNDRED MILLION IN THAT BOX, TOPS
THAT'S NOTHING TO BE SCARED OF
AS MUCH AS IT TAKES ...!
TWENTY MILLION !
I'LL RAISE YOU
I'LL CRUSH THEM...!

HM.
H-HEY...
ざわ..ざわ..
Y-YOU'RE KIDDING ME...
PFF, IT'S OBVIOUS THEY'RE BLUFFING
THOSE IDIOTS!
IT'S A BLUFF ...!
I'LL RAISE YOU.
DON'T MESS WITH ME...!
WHAT THE ...!?


ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION ...!
おおっ…
さわ
I'LL RAISE YOU FIFTY MILLION !
TWENTY MILLION !
I'LL RAISE YOU

IS TH.S.
WH-WHAT'S GOING ON. ?
ざわ..ざわ..
WOW ...!
JUST LOOK AT 'EM GO...
I'LL RAISE YOU TWENTY MILLION
FIFTY MILLION ...!

THE COUNTER IS LITERALLY BEING BURIED WITH CASH...!
I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M SEEING
IS THIS REALLY HAPPENING ?
IT'S LIKE A DREAM

SAIJOU WE'RE RUNNING LOW AGAIN.
AH.
YES
TWENTY MILLION

WHAT ?
YOUNG MASTER
MAY I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU
MATSU-NUMA, THE MONEY
OR SOME-THING ?
SO, WHAT, IS THIS BROKER LOADED
HE'S A BROKER WHO MAKES A KILLING OFF BULLYING CORPORATIONS.
IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, HE WAS ONCE THE TOKYO DISTRICT'S TOP PUBLIC PROCECUTOR
I REMEMBER HIM
THE MAN CALLED FUNADA, THE ONE STANDING BEHIND YASUDA
AH WELL, YOU COULD SAY THAT
WITHIN HIS FIELD, THERE'S NOT ONE MAN WHO DOESN'T KNOW THAT FIEND'S NAME
HMF
AND ...?

ALRIGHT, SO I HAVE THAT MUCH, AND.
ONE BILLION THREE HUNDRED MILLION
IF I COLLECT ANOTHER SEVEN HUNDRED MIL FROM ANOTHER SOURCE
HOW MUCH WERE YOU ABLE TO SECURE FOR TODAY'S EVENT ?
MATSU-NUMA

HUH ...?
I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE
THEN I'LL HAVE TWO BILLION ON HAND .
IF I HAVE THAT MUCH DO YOU FORSEE ANY PROBLEMS ?

TEN ...?
THEY MAY HAVE UPWARDS OF TEN BILLION.
THE MONEY THEY'VE BROUGHT TONIGHT ,S HARDLY THE END OF THE R RESOURCES THEY'RE JUST PROVING THEY HAVE THE MEANS, SO TO SPEAK
JUDGING FROM THEIR ACTIONS

THAT'S NOT A GUAR-ANTEE
HOW-EVER
I DON'T THINK IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO COLLECT MORE ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE
TWO BILLION COULD BE ENOUGH
IT'S LIKELY.
THAT'S WHAT I ESTIMATE THEIR NET ASSETS TO BE
WELL, YES.
DID YOU JUST SAY TEN BILLION ...?
WHAT THE HELL ...?
AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH MONEY THEY MAY POSSESS...
YOU SEE, WE MUST ALSO FACTOR IN THE BROKER'S ASSOCIATES AND ALLIES

WHAT THE HELL...
MAKE IT STOP...
I'VE ALREADY BET SIX HUNDRED...
SIX HUNDRED MILLION...

GOTTA KEEP GOING...!
THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW
AND BESIDES, IF I CONTINUE TO RAISE,
THEIR MONEY IS BOUND TO RUN OUT EVENTUALLY
I'LL RAISE YOU

FIFTY MILLION
THAT'S IT...!
FIFTY MILLION
THEY'RE EXPECTING ME TO FOLD...
SO... SO...!
SAIJOU BULLISHLY PUSHED AHEAD
HOW-EVER
CONTRARY TO HIS CONFIDENT OUTWARD APPEARANCE
INSIDE, HE WAS SCREAMING IN AGONY
C'MON MAN...
THIRTY MILLION !
I... CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE... HELP ME...
THIRTY MILLION ...!
PLEASE... FOLD...

I'LL RAISE YOU
TWENTY MILLION
WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
WHAT SHOULD I...
IF I JUST KEEP GOING, THEN...
THAT'S... EIGHT HUNDRED...?
TH...
THIRTY MILLION
HE MIGHT FOLD...
TWENTY MILLION
I'LL RAISE YOU...
...
...
OH GOD...
THIS IS THE DEVILISH NATURE OF GAMBLING
AFTER YOU'VE THROWN YOURSELF INTO GAMBLING WITHOUT A CARE
AND YOU'VE LET YOUR GUARD DOWN A FEW TIMES
YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF BEING DRAGGED OFF TO AN AWFUL PLACE

IN A BOTTOM-LESS QUAGMIRE OF PURE FEAR...!
AND BEFORE YOU REALIZE IT, YOU'LL BE UP TO YOUR WAIST...

YOUR ANXIETY GROWING AS YOU SINK DOWN INTO ITS DEPTHS...!

YES ...
THIS WAS THE FIRST POKER MATCH WHERE HE FELT HIS ASSURANCE OF A GUARANTEED WIN SLIPPING AWAY
UNTIL THIS MOMENT, HE'D ONLY VAGUELY SENSED IT
HE'D NEVER HAD TO FACE IT BEFORE
HE WAS CONFRONTING THIS DEMON FOR THE FIRST TIME...

VORACIOUSLY
DEVOURING
THE WEALTH, SOULS,
AND FUTURE OF
ALL THOSE IT MEETS...
THE MOST VICIOUSLY
FICKLE MONSTROSITY
IN THE WORLD...
GAMBLING...!